

Tracing the footprints of “Ahura Mazda” and “Avestan Culture” in “Rigved”

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Introduction: Since last 150 years, several scholars who seriously studied both “**Rigved and Avesta**” noticed presence of many identical linguistic features in the **Rigvedic** and **Avestan** languages, the striking similarity in the method of composition and transfer of both texts from one generation to other only via **oral** way, existence of commonalities in some of the beliefs and practices such as Yajna, Soma, some Characters/Deities have made them to believe that both ancient Philosophical Cultures would have developed side by side, but at the different Geographical Locations.

It is generally agreed by many scholars that the Rigvedic People mostly lived in the North-west corner of **Indian Sub-continent**, composed **Rigved** in the territory located in and around the two important Rigvedic rivers **Saraswati**, **Sindhu** including their several tributaries found in the various Mandalas of **Rigved**.

Based on the mention of some Geographical Features in **Avesta**, many researchers say that the Avestan People would have lived in the land located to West or North-west direction of the country of Rigvedic People, somewhere in the present-day **Afghanistan** and **Iran**, and composed **Avestan literature** which is someway different from **Rigved**.

Since both literature remained in oral form for a very long period, the modern-day experts from the different fields, despite using various advanced analytical tools and techniques, are unable to fix the timescale for their compositions, and also till date could not produce any concrete evidence to prove that, out of these two ancient texts, which was composed first. Therefore, in the free world, everybody has liberty to guess the dates of composition of these two old texts as per his/her choice and make the claim accordingly.

In the present article, using an “**Investigative Approach**”, an attempt has been made to probe the roots of occurrences of some similarities and contradictions present in **Rigved and Avesta**, about the Deities, and the existence of the divergent views about the some **Philosophical aspects**. As usual, the four major tools used to conduct present investigation are,

1. **General Observations- Micro-focus** is on the content of the hymns/verses to know the intent of the Composers, and also to understand the contexts of applications.
2. **Simple Logic-** Systematic examination of information available about the various characters/events and corroborating the same with the valid arguments.
3. **Analysis of Data-** Critical examination of the compiled information on a selected Character.
4. **Common Sense-** Justification of a thing or an event reported using general awareness and conventional wisdom.

I. Brief Introduction to the Supreme Deities of Rigved and Avesta

As we know, **Indra** and **Ahura Mazda** are the two different Supreme Deities mentioned in **Rigved** and **Avesta** respectively, hence there is a need to know more about them.

Indra in Rigved

As around 289 hymns are addressed to **Indra** in the Ten Rigvedic Mandalas, there is no doubt that in **Rigved**, **Indra** is the most favorite god of all Rigvedic Composers. But **he** is not the Early God of the Rigvedic People. Textual Evidence shows that **He** was intentionally created to defeat **Vritra**, the evil character and personification of Drought (believed to have taken all water of the world in his captivity). The basic characteristics of **Indra** as given in **Rigved**, are Aggressiveness, Possession of unlimited power/strength generally defined in terms of **Bulls** that gets enhanced further when **He** drinks **Soma**, Use of a very special weapon “**Vajra/Thunder-bolt**” that no one has, Very Fast Moving Chariot whose speed is achieved through the use of a pair of “**Hari**”; tawny steeds. In many verses, **He** has been described as the Mightiest among the Immortals, practically lives in Mid-space/air/atmosphere, and the son of Heaven and Earth. In short, **Indra** is the **Ultimate Storm and War God of Rigved, purposely shaped to slay Vritra**. Subsequently, **Indra** is requested to subdue the Dasas, the Dasyus, the Valas and other personal enemies of the rigvedic Priests and the opponents of the Bharatas as well.

Ahura Mazda in Avesta

As per the Zoroastrians' faith, **Ahura Mazda** is the creator of all living beings and the material world, protector, and upholder of truth called as **Asha** in Avestan literature. **Asha/ aša** is also known as the cosmic law that governs all natural events including appearance of seasons, movement and behavior of the animals and the people. The **Gathas** are the hymns believed to have composed by **Zoroaster**, the Prophet of Avestan religion. It is generally agreed by many that Avestan term “**Ahura Mazda**” is equivalent to Rigvedic term “**Asura Medha**”, but has no way connected to rigvedic deity **Indra**. Based on the functionality point of view, it actually represents “**Varuna**” of **Rigved**. In the old Avestan text, **Indra** has been depicted as the **insignificant Demon**, and in the Younger Texts, **He** has been presented in a devil form as “**Angra Mainyu**”, a bad spirit.

On the line of **Indra** of **Rigved**, in **Avesta**, the character **Verethraghna** is projected as the the Warrior God, the best armed angel. But **he** does not kill the demon of drought to get rain, but that work is left to another character called as **Tishtryā** who fights with the **Apoasha**, the very famous demon of drought in Avestan Literature. Hence, **Indra** of **Rigved** has no match in **Avesta**, whether as **Deity** or **Demon**.

II. Use of the term “Asura” in the Rigvedic Hymns

As mentioned in the earlier paragraphs, the words “**Ahura** and **Mazda**” of **Avesta** are equivalent to “**Asura** and **Medha**” terms found in **Rigved**, and hence there is a need to know more about them, but one by one. In the following paragraphs, we shall focus on “**Asura**” first.

In the Ten Mandalas of **Rigved**, there are more than seventy references of the term “**Asura**” that include its variants like *asurya*, *asurah*, *asuratva*, *asuraghn* etc. Following selected verses of **Rigved** that cover the word “**Asura**” would provide information about its application, and also give the contexts in which the term has been used by the various composers. Please note that the verses have been arranged assuming the order of composition of Rigvedic Mandalas as **2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 5, 8, 9, 1, and 10**. Original Sanskrit verse in Roman script is given first, followed by Griffith Translation [1] of the same verse indicated by symbol- #, and then general comment on each verse highlighting special feature, if any, present in these selected verses.

Mandala-2 References

Hymn addressed to **Agni**

Rv-2.1,6: tvamaghne **rudro asuro** maho divastvaṃ śardho mārutaṃ pṛ kṣ a īśiṣ e |
tvam vātairaruṇ airyāsi śaṃghayastvaṃ pūṣ ā vidhataḥ pāsi nu tmanā ||

Rudra art thou, the **Asura** of mighty heaven: thou art the Maruts' host, thou art the Lord of food, Thou goest with red winds: bliss hast thou in thine home. As Pusan thou thyself protectest worshipers.

Comment: In the very first hymn of **Rigved**, **Rudra** is described as **Asura** who lives in Heaven.

Hymn dedicated to **Brahmanaspati**

Rv-2.23,2: devāscit te **asurya pracetaso** bṛ haspate yajñiyaṃ bhāghamānaśuḥ |
usrā iva sūryo jyotiṣ ā maho viśveṣ āmijjanitā brahmaṇ āmasi ||

Brhaspati, God immortal! verily the Gods have gained from thee, the **wise**, a share in holy rites. As with great light the Sun brings forth the rays of morn, so thou alone art Father of all sacred prayer.

Comment: In the above verse, **Brhaspati** has been denoted as immortal **God** and **Asura** too, but the Poet has used a very special term; **pracetaso** while describing the character as **Asura**. Monier Williams Dictionary gives meaning of the Sanskrit word; प्रचेतस्/ **Pracetas** as: **wise, clever, observant, attentive, mindful** etc. Additionally, word प्रचेतस्/Pracetas is also related to God of water. In short, the composer has used Deva/God and Asura terms at the same time for highlighting the attributes of **Brhaspati**.

Hymn addressed to **Adityas**

Rv-2.27,10: tvam viśveṣ ām~~varuṇ~~ āsi rājā ye ca **devā asura** ye ca martāḥ |
śataṃ no rāsva śarado vicakṣ e.acyāmāyūṃṣ i sudhitāni pūrvā ||

Thou over all, O **Varuna**, art Sovran, be they **Gods, Asura!** or be they mortals.
Grant unto us to see a hundred autumns ours be the blest long lives of our forefathers.

Comment: Here **Varuna** is defined as the King of the whole world that includes Devas, Asuras and the mortal ones (all living beings) as well. The Singer requests **Varuna** to grant him and his fellow colleagues a longer lifespan of hundred autumns which was already enjoyed (well proven) by their forefathers. It directly means, **Varuna** is a very senior, pre-rigvedic character (one of the three ancient Adityas- Varuna, Mitra, and Aryaman, who are the sons of Aditi), and as per the earlier beliefs, the activities of almost all of the rigvedic **Devas** and **Asuras** are watched/monitored by **him**. In other words, there exists some distinction between rigvedic Devas and Asuras.

Hymn dedicated to **Varuna**

Rv-2.28,7: mā no vadhairvaruṇ a ye ta iṣ ṭ āvenah kṛ ṇ vant~~asura~~ bhrīṇ anti |
mā jyotiṣ aḥ pravasaṭhāni ghanma vi ṣ ū mṛ dhaḥ śīsratho jīvase naḥ ||

Strike us not, **Varuna**, with those dread weapons which, **Asura**, at thy bidding wound the sinner.
Let us not pass away from light to exile. Scatter, that we may live, the men who hate us

Comment: Above verse indicates that **Varuna** as **Asura** has special power, generally uses to destroy the sinner/evil character, but the composer tells **him** not to apply the same power on the Priests, otherwise, it would hurt them and also forced them to move away from the light to the darkness/take shelter somewhere. It practically means, **Varuna** as the **Asura**, needs to select the target of **his** attack very wisely, and should not to harm innocent people like the Priests. The verse indirectly portrays, as if **Varuna**, being directly responsible for water management on the land, is somehow unhappy with the People/Priests, and has purposely restricted supply of rainwater to all.

Hymn addressed to **Indra and Others**

Rv-2.30,4: bṛ haspate tapuṣ āśneva vidhya vṛ kadvaras~~asurasya~~ vīrān |
yathā jaghantha dhṛ ṣ atā purā cidevā jah~~ś~~atrumasmākamindra ||

As with a bolt, Brhaspati, fiercely flaming, pierce thou **Vrkadvaras'**, the **Asura's**, heroes.
Even as in time of old with might thou slewest, so slay even now our enemy, O Indra.

Comment: Here, **vṛ kadvaraso asurasya vīrān**, means the demons in the form wolves who are stationed at the doors of **asurasya vīrān /Asura's Hero**. With the references to the earlier and the next verses of the hymn, probably, the phrase **asurasya vīrān /Asura's Hero** implies the character,

Vritra who is the regular Enemy of Rigvedic People, and in the said verse the composer requests **Indra** to use his special weapon, **Vajra/thunderbolt** to destroy the Atmospheric **Shatru/foe**. In the verse, **Asura's Hero** phrase actually used to describe the demonic character; **Vritra** who lives in the company of wolves/bad characters.

Mandala-3 References

Hymn dedicated to **Agni**

Rv-3.3,4: pitā yajñānāmasuro vipāścītām vimānamaghnirvayunaṃ ca vāghatām |
ā viveśa rodasī bhūrivarpasā purupriyo bhandate dhāmabhiḥ kaviḥ ||

The Sire of sacrifice, great God of **holy bards**, **Agni**, the measure and the symbol of the priests,
Hath entered heaven and earth that show in varied form: the Sage whom many love rejoiceth in his might.

Comment: Logically speaking, the Singer has described **Yajna/Sacrifice Asura** as the Father of **Agni**. This interpretation is based on the fact that every time the Priests create a fresh **Agni/fire** (give birth to **Agni**) in the beginning of Yajna/sacrifice by kindling the wood in the Yajna-kunda /altar, and it can not be other way round i.e., Agni as father of Yajna is not intended by the Composer. The verse also explains that Agni arrives in the world (heaven and earth) in different forms such as the **Sun** in the sky, and **Fire** on the land. Here, **yajñānāmasuro** in totality means **Yajna-kunda** that houses **Agni**, which is considered as **Asura**. It is also true that from a long distance, Yajna ritual is regularly identified by the flames of Agni and the spoken words/songs/hymns/mantras, and hence along with **altar**, **Agni** symbolically represents **Yajna**.

Hymn addressed to **Agni**

Rv-3.29,11: tanūnapādūcyate gharbha āsuro narāśaṃso bhavati yad vijāyate |
mātariśvā yadamimīta mātari vātasya sargho abhavatsarīmaṇi ||

As Germ Celestial he is called Tanunapat, and Narasamsa born diffused in varied shape.
Formed in his Mother he is Matarisvan; he hath, in his course, become the rapid flight of wind

Comment: Here the phrase, **gharbha āsuro** stands for **Agni**; the **Great (Asuro)**, but yet to be born child of his mother specifically called as **Tanunapat**, and **Narasamsa**, when physically appears in various shapes, grows rapidly with **Vayu/wind** and occupies the mid-space/ rising flames touching the sky. The description actually presents the case of **Wild** or **Forest Fire** which gets propagated very fast with the blowing wind in the woods. Even today, the forest fires frequently destroy acres of forest plants and also consume several bodies of the animals/birds (**Tanunapat**) and human-beings (**Narasamsa**). In reality, **Tanunapat**, and **Narasamsa** terms in the verse tell us about the

hidden destructive power or potential strength of **Agni** who does not spare even any living being, whether they are the animals or the humans. The term, **Matarisvan** probably indicates “**natural birth of Agni**” through the forest fire.

Hymn dedicated to **Agni**

Rv-3.29,14: pra saptahotā sanakādarocata māturupasthe yadaśocadūdhani |
na ni miṣṣ ati suraṇ o dive-diveyadasurasya jaṭ harājāyata ||

Served by the seven priests, he shone forth from ancient time, when in his Mother's bosom, in her lap, he glowed.

Giving delight each day he closeth not his eye, since from the **Asura's** body he was brought to life.

Comment: Here **yadasurasya jatharā** means **Asura's stomach** or, **Agni** has been brought to the life from the **body of omnipotent** or from the **Yajna-kunda/ fire altar** by the seven Priests very similar to the description available in the verse **Rv-3.3,4 (pitā yajñānāmasuro)**.

Hymn addressed to **Indra**

Rv-3.38,4: ātiṣ ṭ hantaṃ pari viśve abhūṣ añchriyo vasānaścarati svarociḥ |
mahat tad vṛ ṣ ṇ **asurasya** nāmā **viśvarūpo** amṛ tāni tasthau ||

Even as he mounted up they all adorned him: self-luminous he travels clothed in splendour.

That is the Bull's, the **Asura's** mighty figure: he, omniform, hath reached the eternal waters.

Comment: Here **Indra** has been defined as **Asura** and compared with **Bull** when occupies/covers/encompasses the whole world and eventually becomes real **vishvarupa**.

Hymn dedicated to **Indra, Parvata, Etc**

Rv-3.53,7: ime bhojā aṅghiraso virūpā divas putrāso **asurasya vīrāḥ** |
viśvāmitrāya dadato maghāni sahasrasāve pra tiranta āyuh ||

Bounteous are these, Angirases, Virupas: the **Asura's Heroes** and the Sons of Heaven.

They, giving store of wealth to Visvamitra, prolong his life through countless Soma-pressings.

Comment: Here **Bhoja, Sages from Angirasa** family, and **Virupa** are treated as the sons of heaven (God gifted characters) and the **Asura's Heros**. **Visvamitra**, the composer of Mandala-3 expects blessings from these **Asuras/gifted human beings** for a longer life.

Hymn addressed to **Visvedeva**

Rv-3.55,1: uṣ asaḥ pūrvā adha yad vyūṣ urmahad vi jajñe akṣ araṃ pade ghoḥ |
vratā devānāmupa nu prabhūṣ anmahad devānāmasuratvamekam ||

At the first shining of the earliest Mornings, in the Cow's home was born the Great Eternal.
Now shall the statutes of the Gods be valid. Great is the Gods' supreme and sole dominion -

Comment : mahad devānāmasuratvamekam, the last part of the verse is used by the **Poet** at the end of **all 22 verses** of the said hymn indicative of “all Great Gods who are also **Asuras** ultimately belong to one domain or one class (**Divine Beings**)/*tat ekam*”.

Hymn addressed to **Visvedevas**

Rv-3.56,8: triruttamā dūṇ aśā rocanāni **trayo rājantyasurasya vīrāḥ** |
ṛ tāvāna iṣ irā dūḥ abhāsastrirā divo vidathe santu devāḥ ||

Three are the bright realms, best, beyond attainment, and three, the **Asura's Heroes**, rule as Sovrans,
Holy and vigorous, never to be injured. Thrice may the Gods from heaven attend our synod.

Comment: The verse highlights presence of three different immortal entities/ **Asura's Heroes**, (mentioned in the earlier verse, **Rv-3.56,7** as Mitra, Varuna, and Savitar) who rule from the heaven. The Poet requests them not to hurt him and his associates as they are the pious persons. The Singer also invites these three Gods who firmly believe in truth to attend the assembly from heaven.

Mandala-4

Hymn dedicated to **Agni**

Rv-4.2,5: ghomām aghne 'vimām aśvī yajño nṛ vatsakhā sadam id apramṛ ṣ yaḥ |
iḥ āvāmeṣ oasura prajāvān dīrgho rayiḥ pṛ thubudhnaḥ sabhāvān ||

Agni, be this our sacrifice eternal, with brave friends, rich in kine and sheep and horses,
Rich, Asura! in sacred food and children, in full assembly, wealth broad-based and during.

Comment: Here, **Agni** has been described as **Asura** (**Agni** worship cult created by **Ila**?).

Hymn addressed to **Savitar**

Rv-4.53,1: tad devasya savitur vāryam mahad vṛ ṇīmahe**asurasya pracetasah** |
chardir yena dāśuṣ e yachati tmanā tan no mahām ud ayān devo aktubhiḥ ||

Of Savitar the God, the **sapient Asura**, we crave this great gift which is worthy of our choice,
Wherewith he freely grants his worshiper defence. This with his rays the Great God hath vouchsafed to us.

Comment: In the said verse, God **Savitar** is defined as the **asurasya pracetasah** /**clever Asura**.

Mandala-6 References

Hymn dedicated to **Indra**

Rv-6.19,4: taṃ va indraṃ catinamasya śākairiha nūnaṃ vājayanto huvema |
yathā cit pūrve jaritāra **āsuranedyā** anavadyā ariṣṭ āḥ ||

Now, fain for strength, let us invite your Indra hither, who lieth hidden with his
Heroes,-
Free from all blame, without reproach, uninjured, e'en as were those who sang, of old,
his praises

Comment: In comparison with **Indra**, the Singer has described **himself** as **āsuranedyā** /non approachable and blameless like his ancestors (the Poet belongs to family of Angirasa).

Hymn addressed to **Indra**

Rv-6.20,2: divo na tubhyamanvindra satrā**asuryaṃ** devebhirdhāyī viśvam |
ahiṃ yad vṛ tramapo vavrivāṃsaṃ hannaṇ jīṣ in viṣ ṇ unāsacānaḥ ||

Even as the power of Dyaus, to thee, O Indra, all **Asura** sway was by the Gods entrusted,
When thou, Impetuous! leagued with Visnu, slewest Vṛtra the Dragon who enclosed the waters.

Comment: Verse from hymn addressed to **Indra** mentions that all Gods have handed over special powers/**asuras** to **Indra**, and then in a company of **Visnu**, he slayed **Vṛitra**/the obstacle of water.

Hymn addressed to **Indra**

Rv-6.36.1: satrā madāsastava viśvajanyāḥ satrā rāyo.adha ye pāṛthivāsaḥ |
satrā vājānāmabhavo vibhaktā yad deveṣ u dhārayathā**asuryaṃ** ||

Thy raptures ever were for all men's profit: so evermore have been thine earthly riches.
Thou still hast been the dealer-forth of vigour, since among Gods thou hast had power
and Godhead.

Comment: The verse explains that among the all Gods, through **his** actions, **Indra** has proven that **he** is mightier/powerful (**asura**) than others.

Hymn dedicated to **Soma-Rudra**

Rv-6.74,1: somārudrā dhārayethā**asuryaṃ** pra vāmiṣṭ ayo.aramaśnuvantu |
dame-dame sapta ratnā dadhānā śaṃ no bhūtaṃ **dvipadeśaṃ catuṣpade**||

Hold fast your Godlike sway, O Soma-Rudra: let these our sacrifices quickly reach you.
Placing in every house your seven great treasures, bring blessing to our quadrupeds and bipeds.

Comment: The Singer has described **Soma-Rudra** combination as the **Great** and jointly requested them to provide happiness to the *dvipade/* two legs (human-beings?) and *chatuspade/* four legs (animals like cows?) through their generosity. Surprisingly, in the last verse of the hymn (**Rv-6.74,4**), the composer requests the duo to rescue them from the clutches of **Varuna**, practically means to make them free from the dependency of **Varuna** (for water). Then the fresh question arises, Were the Priests from Angirasa Family unhappy about the performance of **Varuna**; their earlier Supreme Deity? Probably, the precarious state of their beloved river **Saraswati** would have made the Sage to say so.

Mandala-7 References

Hymn dedicated to **Agni**

Rv-7.2,3: **ī enyaṃvo asuraṃ** sudakṣ amantardūtam rodasī satyavācam |
manuṣ vadaghnīm manunā samiddhaṃ samadhvarāya sadamin mahema ||

We will extol at sacrifice for ever, as men may do, Agni whom Manu kindled,
Your very skilful Asura, meet for worship, envoy between both worlds, the truthful speaker.

Comment: Here, **Agni** has been named as **Ila's favorite asura** to whom Manu/man had kindled. The Singer has also termed **Agni** as the truth speaker.

Hymn addressed to **Agni**

Rv-7.6,1: **pra samrājo asurasya** praśastiṃ puṃsaḥ kṛ ṣ ṭ īnāmanumādyasya |
indrasyeva pra tavaśas kṛ tāni vanded**āruṃ** vandamānovivakmi ||

Praise of the Asura, high imperial Ruler, the Manly One in whom the folk shall triumph-
I laud his deeds who is as strong as Indra, and lauding celebrate the Fort-destroyer.

Comment: By mentioning **Agni** as **samrājo asurasya**, as fire can destroy the forts/towns, here from this strength point of view, the Poet has equated **Agni** with **Indra**, called **him** as **dāruṃ** .

Hymn dedicated to **Indra**

Rv-7.30,3: ahā yadindra sudinā vyuchān dadho yat ketumupamaṃ samatsu |
nyaghnīḥ **sīdadasuro** na hotā huvāno atra subhaghāya devān ||

When fair bright days shall dawn on us, O Indra, and thou shalt bring thy banner near in battle,
Agni the Asura shall sit as Herald, calling Gods hither for our great good fortune.

Comment: The verse from hymn addressed to **Indra** purposely defines **Agni** as **Asura**, just to praise **him** during Yajna to achieve victory in the futuristic war.

Hymn addressed to **Visvedevas**

Rv-7.36,2: imāṃ vāṃ **mitrāvaruṇā** suvṛ ktimiṣ aṃ na kṛ ṇ **vasurā navīyaḥ** |
ino vāmanyah padavīradabdho janaṃ ca mitro yatati bruvāṇ aḥ ||

O **Asuras, O Varuna and Mitra**, this hymn to you, like food, anew I offer.
One of you is a strong unerring Leader, and Mitra, speaking, stirreth men to labour.

Comment: Mitra and Varuna are jointly termed as **Asuras**/ powerful characters, and out of these two, one (Varuna) is the true leader, and other one/ Mitra makes the people to move forward.

Hymn dedicated to **Maruts**

Rv-7.56,24: asme vīro marutaḥ śuṣ myastu janānāṃ yo**asuro vidhartā** |
apo yena sukṣ itaye taremādha svamoko abhi vaḥ syāma ||

Ours, O ye Maruts, be the vigorous Hero, the **Lord Divine** of men, the strong Sustainer,
With whom to fair lands we may cross the waters, and dwell in our own home with you beside us.

Comment: Here **Maruts** have been described as **hero** and **Asura** as well. The Composer expresses his desire to cross the waters/river with the aid of Maruts (possibly, the Composer might be travelling in a boat, crossing the river to go home, and hence he needs favour from Maruts).

Hymn addressed to **Mitra-Varuna**

Rv-7.65,2: tā hi **devānāmasurā** tāvaryā tā naḥ kṣ itīḥ karatamūrjayantīḥ |
aśyāma **mitrāvaruṇā** vayaṃ vāṃ dyāvā ca yatra pīpayannahā ca ||

For they are **Asuras of Gods**, the friendly make, both of you, our lands exceeding fruitful.
May we obtain you, Varuna and Mitra, wherever Heaven and Earth and days may bless us.

Comment: In the verse, **Mitra-Varuna** duo have been denoted as **devānāmasurā/ Gods among the Asuras**.

Hymn dedicated to **Saraswati**

Rv-7.96,1: bṛ hadu ghāyiṣ e vaco**asuryā** nadīnām |
sarasvatīmin mahayāsuvṛ ktibhiḥ stomairvasiṣ ṭ ha rodasī ||

I sing a lofty song, for she is **mightiest**, most divine of Streams.
Sarasvati will I exalt with hymns and lauds, and, O **Vasistha**, Heaven and Earth.

Comment: Here, **Vasistha** has used **Asurya** word to describe river **Saraswati** as the **mightiest** among the various streams known to him, but when he visits **Puru's** Land after the victory in **War**.

Mandala-5 References

Hymn addressed to **Agni**

Rv-5.10,2: tvam no aghne adbhuta kratvā dakṣ asya maṃhanā |
tve **asuryam** āruhat krāṇ ā mitro na yajñīyaḥ ||

Ours art thou, wondrous Agni, by wisdom and bounteousness of power.
The might of **Asuras** rests on thee, like Mitra worshipful in act.

Comment: Here **Agni** has not only been denoted as **Asura**, but also equated with **Mitra** for Yajna rite.

Hymn dedicated to **Agni**

Rv-5.12,1: prāghnaye bṛ hate yajñīyāya ṛ tasya vṛ ṣ **asurāya** manma |
ghṛ taṃ na yajña āsy supūtaṃ ghīram bharevṛ ṣ **abhā** pratīcīm ||

To **Agni**, lofty **Asura**, meet for worship, Steer of eternal Law, my prayer I offer;
I bring my song directed to the Mighty like pure oil for his mouth at sacrifices.

Comment: The Poet has called **Agni** as the lofty **Asura** who is the bull of truth.

Hymn addressed to **Agni**

Rv-5.15,1: pra vedhase kavaye vedyāya ghīram bhare yaśase pūrvyāya |
ghṛ taprasatto **asuraḥ** suśevo rāyo dhartā dharuṇ o vasvo aghniḥ ||

To him, the far-renowned, the wise Ordainer, ancient and glorious, a song I offer.
Enthroned in oil, the **Asura**, bliss-giver, is Agni, firm support of noble, riches.

Comment: Similar to the earlier verses of the same mandala, **Agni** is termed as **Asurah/Great**.

Hymn dedicated to **Indra. Surya. Atri.**

Rv-5.40,5: yat tvā sūrya svarbhānus tamasāvidhyad **asuraḥ** |
akṣ etra vid yathā mughdho bhuvanāny adīdhayuh ||

O **Surya**, when the **Asura**'s descendant Svarbhanu, pierced thee through and through with darkness,
All creatures looked like one who is bewildered, who knoweth not the place where he is standing

Comment: The said verse is addressed to **Surya**, denoting him as **asuraḥ/Great**

Hymn addressed to **Indra. Surya. Atri.**

Rv-5.40,9: yaṃ vai sūryaṃ svarbhānus tamasāvidhyad **asuraḥ** |
atrayas tam anv avindan nahy anye aśaknuvan ||

The Atris found the Sun again, him whom Svarbhanu of the brood
Of **Asuras** had pierced with gloom. This none besides had power to do.

Comment: Here **Svarbhanu**/ a demon, **who covers the Sun God** is identified as **Asura**.

Hymn dedicated to **Visvedevas**

Rv-5.41,3: ā vām yeṣ ṭ hāśvinā huvadhyai vātasya patman rathasya puṣ ṭ au |
uta vā divo **asurāya** manma prāndhāmsīva yajyave bharadhvam ||

You will I call to feed the car-horse, Asvins, with the wind's flight swiftest of those who travel:
Or also to the **Asura of heaven**, Worshipful, bring a hymn as 'twere libation.

Comment: **Asvins** are called as **Asura** of Heaven.

Hymn addressed to **Visvedevas**

Rv-5.42,1: pra śamtamā varuṇaṃ dīdhitī ghīr mitram bhagham aditiṃ nūnam aśyāḥ |
pr ś adyonih pañcahotā śr ṇ otv atūrtapanthā**asuro mayobhuḥ** ||

Now may our sweetest song with deep devotion reach Varuna, Mitra, Aditi, and Bhaga.
May the Five Priests' Lord, dwelling in oblations, **bliss-giving Asura**, hear, whose paths are open.

Comment: Here, the Poet has portrayed the lord (who?-but unclear) of imagination of the five Priests as **asuro mayobhuḥ** / **bliss-creating Asura**.

Hymn dedicated to **Visvedevas**

Rv-5.42,11: tamu ṣ ṭ uhi yaḥ sviṣ uḥ sudhanvā yo viśvasya kṣ ayati bheṣ ajasya |
yakṣ vā mahe saumanasāya rudraṃ namobhir**devam asuraṃ** duvasya ||

Praise him whose bow is strong and sure his arrow, him who is Lord of every balm that bealeth.
Worship thou **Rudra** for his great good favour: adore the **Asura**, God, with salutations.

Comment: In the verse, **Rudra** has been defined as **Asura** and **God** as well.

Hymn addressed to **Visvedevas**

Rv-5.49,2: prati prayāṇa**masurasya** vidvān sūktair **devam** savitāraṃ duvasya |
upa bruvīta namasā vijānañ jyeṣ ṭ haṃ ca ratnaṃ vibhajantam āyoh ||

Knowing full well the **Asura**'s time of coming, worship God **Savitar** with hymns and praises.
Let him who rightly knoweth speak with homage to him who dealeth out man's noblest treasure.

Comment: In above verse, **Savitar** is termed as **God** and **Asura** too.

Hymn dedicated to **Visvedevas**

Rv-5.51,11: svasti no mimītām aśvinā bhaghaḥ svasti devy aditir anarvaṇaḥ |
svasti **pūṣ ā asuro dadhātunaḥ** svasti dyāvāpṛ thivī sucetunā ||

May Bhaga and the Asvins grant us health and wealth, and Goddess Aditi and he whom none resist.

The **Asura Pusan** grant us all prosperity, and Heaven and Earth most wise vouchsafe us happiness

Comment: In the said verse, **Pusan** is called as **Asura**.

Hymn addressed to **Mitra-Varuna**

Rv-5.63,3: samrājā ughrā vṛ ṣ abhā divas patī pṛ thivyā mitrāvaruṇ ā vicarṣ aṇ ī |
citrebhir abhairs upa tiṣ ṭ hatho ravaṃ dyām varṣ ayathā**asurasya māyayā** ||

Imperial Kings, strong, Heroes, Lords of earth and heaven, Mitra and Varuna, ye ever active Ones,
Ye wait on thunder with the many-tinted clouds, and by the **Asura's magic power** cause Heaven to rain.

Comment: A pair of **Mitra-Varuna** is described to possess the **asurasya māyayā /magical power of Asura**, and hence the Singer expects them to act effectively/ make use of their power to bring the rain from heaven. Both are appealed to do **Indra's** main duty as the rain provider.

Hymn dedicated to **Mitra-Varuna**

Rv-5.63,7: dharmaṇ ā mitrāvaruṇ ā vipaścītā vratā rakṣ ethā**asurasya māyayā** |
ṛ tena viśvam bhuvanaṃ vi rājathaḥ sūryam ā dhattho divi citryaṃ ratham ||

Wise, with your Law and through the **Asura's magic power** ye guard the ordinances, Mitra-Varuna.

Ye by eternal Order govern all the world. Ye set the Sun in heaven as a refulgent car.

Comment: Another verse from the same hymn (Rv-5.63) projects **Mitra-Varuna** combine as the possessors of **Magical power of Asura**, and the Poet wants them to guard/implement their old Dharma/ laws/eternal orders properly which is necessary to govern the whole world. Somehow, the Singer wants to keep **Indra** out of picture and likes to trust the Old Gods.

Hymn addressed to **Parjanya**

Rv-5.83,6: divo no vṛ ṣ ṭ im maruto rarīdhvam pra pinvata vṛ ṣ ṇ o aśvasya dhārāḥ |
arvāñ etena stanayitnunehy apo niṣ iñcann**asuraḥ pitā naḥ**||

Send down for us the rain of heaven, ye Maruts, and let the Stallion's flood descend in torrents.
Come hither with this thunder while thou pourest the waters down, our **heavenly Lord and Father**.

Comment: Though the hymn is addressed to **Parjanya**, but the said verse is devoted to **Maruts**, and the Composer requests **Maruts** to bring torrential rains with thunder. The confusion here is due to use of a new phrase “**asuraḥ pitā naḥ**” by the Poet. Please note that **Parjanya** term is absent in Mandala 2 and 3, the first two Mandalas of **Rigved**. As per the earliest rigvedic beliefs, it is in the **Varuna's** domain (heaven/sky) where celestial water is available that comes down in the form of rain on the land. But, due to presence of **Vritra** (indicates presence of Drought like situation on Earth or personification of Drought) in the mid-space, **Varuna**, (one of the earliest Adityas and the son of Aditi) is unable to provide rain to the living beings of the Earth. Therefore, the character **Indra** was created to counter the effect of **Vritra**. As per typical myth, **Indra** kills **Vritra**, and rescues rain-clouds from the captivity of the latter, then releases water in the Rivers. After Mandala-3, due to the frequent fights between the Bharatas and the Five tribes, made the Priests to engage **Indra** in the subsequent wars, then Rigvedic Composers created a new Deity, named him as **Parjanya** (Rv-4.57,8), who would be directly reporting to **Indra** and responsible for providing rain to the people of Earth. Actually, **Maruts** do not bring rain water from heaven/ Varuna's place, but assist **Parjanya** in carrying rain-clouds from one place to another or spreading the rain all over. Since pre-rigvedic time, the ancestors of the rigvedic Priests believed that unless **Vritra** is slayed by **Indra**, the celestial water from **Varuna's** place/heaven would not descend to the ground in the form of rain. Hence, “**asuraḥ pitā**”/ **heavenly Lord and Father** phrase probably means **Varuna, the real source of water** and not applicable to **Maruts** or **Parjanya** or even **Indra**.

Mandala-8: References

Hymn dedicated to **Agni**

Rv-8.19.23: yadī ghr̥ tebhirāhuto vāśīmagnirbharata uccāva ca | **asura iva nirṇijam** ||

While, served with sacrificial oil, now upward and now downward **Agni** moves his sword,
As doth the **Asura** his robe.

Comment: The verse presents **Agni** as **Asura** wearing his robe/outerclothe.

Hymn addressed to **Maruts**

Rv-8.20,17: yathā rudrasya sūnavo divo vaśanty**asurasya vedhasaḥ** | yuvānastathedasat ||

Even as Rudra's Sons, the brood of the Creator Dyaus, the **Asura**, desire,
O Youthful Ones, so shall it be:

Comment: Here **Maruts** are described as the children of **Rudra, Asura/the lord of Heaven**.

Hymn dedicated to **Mitra-Varuna**

Rv-8.25,4: mahāntā mitrāvaruṇ ā samrājā **devāvasurā** | ṛ tāvānāvṛ tamā ghoṣ ato bṛ hat ||

Great Varuna and Mitra, Gods, **Asuras and imperial Lords**,
True to Eternal Law proclaim the high decree.

Comment: In the said verse, **Mitra-Varuna** duo have been identified as **devāvasurā/ the Gods and the Asuras/the Lords** as well.

Hymn addressed to **Visvedevas**

Rv-8.27,20: yad vābhipitve **asurā ṛ taṃ**yate chardiryema vi dāśuṣ e |
vayaṃ tad vo vasavo viśvavedasa upa stheyāma madhya ā ||

Or, **Asuras**, when ye have sheltered the worshipper who goes to sacrifice, at eve
may we, O Vasus, ye possessors of all wealth, come then into the midst of You.

Comment: In the verse, the **Sun (Surya)**-mentioned in the earlier verse) is defined as **Asura**.

Hymn dedicated to **Varuna**

Rv-8.42,1: astabhnād **dyāmasuro** viśvavedā amimīta varimāṇ aṃ pṛ thivyāḥ |
āsīdad viśvā bhuvanāni samrād viśvet tāni **varuṇ asya** vratāni ||

Lord of all wealth, the **Asura** propped the heavens, and measured out the broad earth's wide
expanses.

He, King supreme, approached all living creatures. All these are **Varuna's** holy operations.

Comment: Above verse indicates **Varuna** as “**dyāmasuro**”, means **Asura** who lives in **heaven**, is
the real cause of the spread of Earth. **Varuna** the supreme ruler, who governs all worldly features
including all living beings, non-living things as per his laws from his seat.

Hymn addressed to **Indra**

Rv-8.90,6: tamu tvā **nūnamasura pracetasam** rādho bhāghamivemahe |
mahīva kṛ ttiḥ śaraṇ ā ta indra pra te sumnā no aśnavan ||

As such we seek thee now, **O Asura, thee most wise**, craving thy bounty as our share.
Thy sheltering defence is like a mighty cloak. So may thy glories reach to us.

Comment: In the verse above, **Indra** is termed as the very **clever Asura** on the line of **Varuna**.

Hymn dedicated to **Indra**

Rv-8.96,9: tighmamāyudham marutāmanīkaṃ kasta indra prati vajraṃ dadharṣ a |
anāyudhāso asurā adevāścakreṇ a tānapa vapa ṛ jīṣ in ||

A sharpened weapon is the host of Maruts. Who, Indra, dares withstand thy bolt of thunder?
Weaponless are the Asuras, the godless: scatter them with thy wheel, Impetuous Hero.

Comment: The verse poses a fresh question about “**anāyudhāso asurā adevā**”/ **the Weaponless Asuras who are godless too; but who are they?**

Note : Some verses of the hymn, **Rv-8.96** have been discussed separately in conjunction with the other late hymns of **Mandala-8** addressed to **Indra**.

Hymn addressed to **Indra**

Rv-8.97,1: yā indra bhuja ābharah svarvānasurebhyah |
stotāramin maghavannasya vardhaya ye ca tve vṛ ktabarhiṣ aḥ ||

O Indra, Lord of Light, what joys thou broughtest from the **Asuras**,
Prosper therewith, O Maghavan, him who lauds that deed, and those whose grass is trimmed for thee.

Comment: The composer has specifically described **Indra** as the **lord/strong-arm** has brought back/regained the light (the Sun?) or the traditional beliefs/knowledge from other **Asuras**. Were these pre-rigvedic features intentionally taken away or snatched by someone from the Priests? Who are those undefined **Asuras**? Please see the “**Concluding Remarks**” for explanation.

Mandala-9 references, in the Hymns Devoted to Soma Pavamana

Rv-9.71,2: pra kriṣ ṭ iheva śūṣ a eti roruvāśuryam varṇ am ni riṇ ṭe asya tam |
jahāti vavriṃ pitureti niṣ kṛ tamupaprutam kṛ ṇ ute nirṇ ijam tanā ||

Strong, bellowing, he goes, like one who slays the folk; he lets this hue of **Asuras** flow off from him,
Throws off his covering, seeks his father's meeting-place, and thus makes for himself the bright robe he assumes.

Comment: **Soma's** flow towards sieve is termed as **Asura**.

Rv-9.73,1: srakve drapsasya dhamataḥ samasvarannṛ tasya yonā samarantanābhayaḥ |
trīn sa mūrdhno **asuraścakra** ārabhe satyasyanāvaḥ sukr tamapīparan ||

They from the spouting drop have sounded at the rim: naves speed together to the place of sacrifice.

That **Asura** hath formed, to seize, three lofty heights. The ships of truth have borne the pious man across.

Comment: Here also, pressed **Soma** juice is called as **Asura**.

Rv-9.74,7: śvetam rūpaṃ kṛ ṇ ute yat siṣ āsati somonīd hvānasuro veda bhūmanaḥ |
dhiyā śamī sacate semabhi pravada divas kavandhamava darṣ adudriṇ am ||

Soma assumes white colour when he strives to gain: the **bounteous Asura** knows full many a precious boon.

Down the steep slope, through song, he comes to sacrifice, and he will burst the water-holding cask of heaven,

Comment: Soma is depicted as **Asura**.

Rv-9.99,1: ā haryatāya dhṛ ṣ ṇ ave dhanustanvanti paumṣyam |
śukrāṃvayanty~~asurāya~~ **nirṇ ijaṃ** vipāmaghre mahīyuvah ||

They for the Bold and Lovely One ply manly vigour like a bow:
joyous, in front of songs they weave bright raiment for the **Lord Divine**.

Comment: Soma is described as **Asura** wearing clothes.

Note: In Mandala-9, other than Soma, no character has been given the special status of “Asura”.

Mandala-1

Hymn addressed to **Varuna and Others**

Rv-1.24,14 : ava te heḷ o varuṇ a namobhirava yajñebhirīmahe havirbhiḥ |
kṣ ayannasmabhyama**surā** **pracetā** rājannenāṃsi śīsrathaḥ kṛ tāni ||

With bending down, oblations, sacrifices, O **Varuna**, we deprecate thine anger:
Wise Asura, thou King of wide dominion, loosen the bonds of sins by us committed.

Comment: **Varuna** has been called as the **Clever Asura** and the Poet requests him to loosen the bond of sins already committed by the Priests. It means, something has happened earlier, that has annoyed **Varuna**, and now the Composer sincerely requests **Him**, to forgive them for the mistakes made by them in the past, free all of them from the sins committed. In the hymn **Rv-1.24**; the Poet also reminds **Varuna** that **He** is the son of **Aditi**, the earliest **Aditya** who has matchless power, and it is **He**, directly responsible for the implementation the laws of Nature. The Singer appeals to **Varuna** to release him from the bondage means a **mental block** created in the minds of the Priests that led to disrespect shown to **Varuna** due to some misunderstanding in the past. Now, the Poet says that all of them have realised their mistakes, and everyone wants to live under **His** rule and the Guidance.

Hymn dedicated to **Savitar**

Rv-1.35,7: vi suparṇ o antarikṣ āṇ y akhyad ghabhīravapā**surah** sunīthaḥ |
kvedānīm sūryaḥ kaś ciketa katamām dyām raśmir asyā tatāna ||

He, strong of wing, hath lightened up the regions, deep-quivering **Asura**, the gentle Leader.
Where now is Surya, where is one to tell us to what celestial sphere his ray hath wandered?

Comment: **Savitar** is defined as **Asura**.

Hymn addressed to **Savitar**

Rv-1.35,10: **hiraṇ yahasto asuraḥ** sunīthaḥ sumṛ ṽ īkaḥ svavān yātvarvām |
apasedhan rakṣ aso yātudhānānasthād devaḥ pratidoṣ aṃ ghr ṇ ānaḥ ||

May he, **gold-handed Asura**, kind Leader, come hither to us with his help and favour.
Driving off Raksasas and Yatudhanas, the God is present, praised in hymns at evening.

Comment: Here, **Savitar** is praised as **Gold-handed Asura**.

Hymn dedicated to **Indra**

Rv-1.54,3: arcā dive bṛ hate śūṣ yaṃ vacaḥ svakṣ atram yasya dhṛ ṣ ato dhṛ ṣ an manah |
bṛ hacchravā asurobarhaṇ ā kṛ taḥ puro haribhyām vṛ ṣ abho ratho hi ṣ aḥ ||

Sing forth to lofty Dyaus a strength-bestowing song, the Bold, whose resolute mind hath independent sway.
High glory hath the **Asura**, compact of strength, drawn on by two Bay Steeds: a Bull, a Car is he.

Comment: **Indra** has been called as **Asura**.

Hymn addressed to **Maruts**

Rv-1.64,2: te jajñire diva ṛ ṣ vāsa ukṣ aṇ o rudrasym~~aryā~~ **asurā arepasah** |
pāvakāsaḥ śucayaḥ sūryā iva satvāno na drapsinoghoravarpaṣaḥ ||

They spring to birth, the lofty Ones, the Bulls of Heaven, **divine**, the youths of Rudra, free from spot and stain;
The purifiers, shining brightly even as suns, awful of form like giants, scattering rain-drops down.

Comment: **Maruts** are described as **Asura**.

Hymn dedicated to **Indra-Agni**

Rv-1.108,6: yadabravam prathamam vām vṛ ṇ āno.ayaṃ~~somo~~ **asurairno vihavyah** |
tām satyām śraddhāmabhyā hi yātamathā somasya pibatam sutasya ||

As first I said when choosing you, in battle we must contend with **Asuras** for this **Soma**.
So came ye unto this my true conviction, and drank libations of the flowing Soma.

Comment: **Soma** is identified as **Asura**.

Hymn addressed to **Rbhus**

Rv-1.110,3: tat savitā vo.amṛ tatvāmāsuavadaghohyaṃ yacchravayanta aitana |
tyaṃ **ciccamasamasurasya** bhakṣaṃ amekam santamakṛ n utā caturvayam ||

Savitar therefore gave you immortality, because ye came proclaiming him whom naught can hide;
And this the **drinking-chalice of the Asura**, which till that time was one, ye made to be fourfold.

Comment: **Rbhus** are illustrated as **Asura**.

Hymn dedicated to **Visvadevas**

Rv-1.122,1: pra vaḥ pāntaṃ raghumanyavo.andho yajñaṃ **rudrāya** mī huṣ e bharadvam |
divo **astoṣ yasurasya vīraiṇṣ** udhyeva maruto rodasyoḥ ||

Say, bringing sacrifice to bounteous Rudra, This juice for drink to you whose wrath is fleeting!
With Dyaus the **Asura's Heroes** I have lauded the Maruts as with prayer to Earth and Heaven.

Comment: In the hymn addressed to **Rudra**, **Heaven/Dyaus** is denoted as **Asura's Hero/Lord**.

Hymn addressed to **Bhavayavya**

Rv-1.126,2: śataṃ rājño nādhamānasya niṣ kāñchatamaśvān prayatān sadya ādam |
śataṃ kakṣ īvā**msurasya ghonām** divi śravo.ajaramā tatāna ||

A hundred necklets from the King, beseeching, a hundred gift-steeds I at once accepted;
Of **the lord's** cows a thousand, I Kaksivan. His deathless glory hath he spread to heaven.

Comment: King **Bhavya**, who lives on the bank of river **Sindhu** is defined as the Lord of cows, as he gives many gifts to Kaksivan that includes several cows.

Hymn dedicated to **Indra**

Rv-1.131,1: indrāya hi **dyaurasuro** anamnatendrāya mahī pṛ thivī varīmabhirdyumnasātā
varīmabhiḥ | indraṃ viśve sajoṣ aso devāso dadhire puraḥ |
indrāya viśvā savanāni mānuṣ ā rātāni santu mānuṣ ā ||

To **Indra Dyaus** the **Asura** hath bowed him down, to Indra mighty Earth with wide-extending tracts, to win the light, with wide-spread tracts.
All Gods of one accord have set Indra in front preeminent.

Comment: **Indra** is projected as **Asura** of Heaven.

Hymn addressed to **Mitra and Varuna**

Rv-1.151,4: pra sā **kṣ itirasurayā** mahi priya ṛ tāvānāv ṛ tamā ghoṣ atho bṛ hat |
yuvaṃ divo bṛ hato dakṣ amabhuvam ghām na dhuryupa yuñjāthe apaḥ ||

The people prospers, **Asuras**! whom ye dearly love: ye, Righteous Ones, proclaim aloud the Holy Law.

That efficacious power that comes from lofty heaven, ye bind unto the work, as to the pole an ox.

Comment: Here, **Mitra** and **Varuna** are termed as the **Asuras**.

Hymn dedicated to **Visvedevas**

Rv-1.164,4: ko dadarśa prathamam jāyamānamasthanvantam yadanasthā bibharti |
bhūmyā asurasḥ ghātmā kva svit ko vidvāmsamupa ghāt praṣ ṭ umetat ||

Who hath beheld him as he sprang to being, seen how the boneless One supports the bony?
Where is the blood of earth, the life, the spirit? Who may approach the man who knows, to ask it?

Comment: **Bhumi/Earth** has been mentioned as **Asura**.

Hymn addressed to **Indra**

Rv-1.174,1: tvam rājendra ye ca devā rakṣ ā nṛṇ pāhy**asura** tvamasmān |
tvam satpatirmaghavā natarutrastvam satyo vasavānaḥ sahodāḥ ||

Thou art the King of all the Gods, O **Indra**: protect the men, O **Asura**, preserve us.
Thou Lord of Heroes, Maghavan, our saver, art faithful, very rich, the victory-giver.

Comment: **Indra** is described as **Asura**.

Mandala-10 references

Hymn dedicated to **Yama Yami**

Rv-10.10,2: na te sakhā sakhyam vaṣ ṭ yetat salakṣ mā yad viṣ urūpābhavāti |
mahas putraso **asurasya** vīrā divo dhartāraurviyā pari khyan ||

Thy friend loves not the friendship which considers her who is near in kindred as stranger.
Sons of the **mighty Asura**, the Heroes, supporters of the heavens, see far around them.

Comment: Through the dialogue between **Yama** and **Yami**, the Poet intimates us as if **Yama** tells **Yami** (both are described as brother and sister of each other) that **the Sons of Asura** when born, would not approve their physical relationship.

Hymn addressed to **Agni**

Rv-10.11,6: udīraya pitarā jāra ā bhaghamiyakṣ ati haryato hṛ ttaish yati |
vivakti vahniḥ svapasyate makhastaviṣ yate**asurovepate** matī ||

Urge thou thy Parents, as a lover ' to delight: the Lovely One desires and craves it from his heart.
The priest calls out, the sacrificer shows his skill, the **Asura** tries his strength, and with the hymn
is stirred.

Comment: Here along with **Agni**, **Soma** offered in Yajna has been referred to **Asura**.

Hymn dedicated to **Visvedevas**

Rv-10.31,6: asyedeṣ ā sumatiḥ paprathānābhavat pūrvyā bhumanāghauḥ |
asya sanī āasurasya yonau samāna ā bharaṇebibhramāṇ āḥ ||

This Bull's most gracious far-extended favour existed first of all in full abundance.
By his support they are maintained in common who in the **Asura's mansion** dwell together.

Comment: **Asura's Yonau** / means **Lord's womb** or place of origin or source of Gods/thoughts as **Asura**.

Hymn addressed to **Agni Saucika Gods**

Rv-10.53,4: tadadya vācaḥ prathamam masīya yenāsurānabhi devāasāma |
ūrjāda uta yajñiyasaḥ pañca janā mama hotramjuṣ adhvam ||

This prelude of my speech I now will utter, whereby we Gods may quell our **Asura foemen**.
Eaters of strengthening food who merit worship, O ye Five Tribes, be pleased with mine oblation.

Comment: It depicts, presence of **Enemy Asura/ Hostile force** who would be overcome by the
Gods when Yajna is performed for the Five Tribes.

Hymn dedicated to **Indra**

Rv-10.54,4 : catvāri te asuryāṇ i nāmādābhyāni mahiṣ asya santi |
tvamaṅgha tāni viśvāni vitse yebhiḥ karmāṇ i maghavañcakartha ||

Thou, Mighty Steer, hast four supremest natures, **Asura natures** that may ne'er be injured.
All these, O Maghavan, thou surely knowest, wherewith thou hast performed thy great
achievements.

Comment: **Indra** is described as **Asura**, who has four names.

Hymn addressed to **Indra**

Rv-10.55,4: yaduṣ a auchaḥ prathamā vibhānāmajanayo yena puṣ ṭ asyapuṣ ṭ am |
yat te jāmitvamavaram parasyā mahan mahatyāasuratvamekam ||

As first among the lights, O Dawn, thou shonest, whereby thou broughtest forth the Stay of
Increase,
Great art thou, matchless is thine **Asura nature**, who, high above, art kin to those beneath thee.

Comment: Existence of matchless **Asura** in the form of **Indra** who is described as the **Ushas**.

Hymn dedicated to **Visvedevas**

Rv-10.56,6: dvidhā sūnavo.**asuraṃ** svarvidamāsthāpayanta tṛ tīyenakarman ā |
svām prajām pitarah pitryam saha āvareṣ vadadhustantumātataṃ ||

In two ways have the sons established in his place the **Asura** who finds the light, by the third act, As fathers, they have set their heritage on earth, their offspring, as a thread continuously spun out.

Comment: Either God **Agni** or **Yajna** ceremony can be taken as **Asura**. It probably means the Sons of Rishi **Angirasa** have established the traditional ritual of their forefathers on the Earth or a new place of residence where they are settled now, and they want to maintain the continuity in **Agni worship** similar to their ancestors by way of performing Yajna regularly.

Hymn addressed to **Brhaspati**

Rv-10.67,2: ṛ taṃśaṃsanta ṛ ju dīdhyānā divas putrāso**asurasyavīrāḥ** |
vipraṃ padamaṅghiraso dadhānā yajñasya dhāmaprathamam mananta ||

#Thinking aright, praising eternal Order, the sons of Dyaus the **Asura, those heroes**, Angirases, holding the rank of sages, first honoured sacrifice's holy statute.

Comment: Here the term **asurasyavīrāḥ** refers to the **Lord of Heroes** (probably indicates **Vipram** / the Earliest Priest **Angirasa**), whose Sons in continuation with their father's tradition, in praise of **rta (Varuna)** have first re-established the Sun/Agni from heaven on Earth while conducting **Yajna**. (Please refer to verse **Rv-3.53,7** which also portrays **Sages from Angirasa Family, Virupa, and Bhoja** together as the **Asuras' Hero/ Ideal persons/ Role Models for others**)

Hymn dedicated to **Visvakarman**

Rv-10.82,5: paro divā para enā pṛ thivyā parodeve**bhirasurair**yadasti |
kaṃ svid gharbham prathamam dadhra āpo yatra devāḥ samapaśyanta viśve ||

That which is earlier than this earth and heaven, before the **Asuras and Gods** had being,-
What was the germ primeval which the waters received where all the Gods were seen together?

Comment: Here the **Asuras** and the **Gods** are shown as the two independent characters who are born from the same womb, means origin/source of all, whether the **Gods** or the **Asuras** is one and the same, but the Singer explains the same in the form of a riddle, as “In whose womb/water, the first germ or life was created? Whether all the Gods were born together then ?”

Hymn addressed to **Visvedevas**

Rv-10.92,6: krāṇ ā rudrā maruto viśvakṛ ṣ ṭ ayo divaḥ śyenāsoasurasya nīl ayah |
tebhiścaṣ ṭ e varuṇ o mitro aryamendrodevabhirarvaśebhirarvaśaḥ ||

Straightway the Rudras, Maruts visiting all men, Falcons of Dyaus, home-dwellers with the **Asura**,
Varuna, Mitra, Aryaman look on with these, and the swift-moving Indra with swift-moving Gods.

Comment: Here, **Rudra** and **Maruts** are called as the **Falcons of Heaven** means the fast moving characters, who live with other **Asura/lord**. Additionally, Varuna, Mitra, Aryaman and Indra (four Adityas as hinted in **Rv-8.52,7**) are shown together to keep watch on others.

Hymn dedicated to **Hari**

Rv-10.96,11: ā rodasī haryamāṇ o mahitvā navyaṃ-navyaṃ haryasi manmanu priyam |
pra pastyama**asura** haryataṃ ghorāviṣ kṛ dhi harayesūryāya ||

#Thou, comprehending with thy might the earth and heaven, acceptest the dear hymn for ever new and new.
O **Asura**, disclose thou and make visible the Cow's beloved home to the bright golden Sun.

Comment: **Hari** (Indra's Horses/Golden colour rays of light) is called as **Asura**.

Hymn addressed to **Indra**

Rv-10.99,2: sa hi dyutā vidyutā veti sāma pṛ thum yonima**suratvāsaśāda** |
sa sanī ebhiḥ prasahāno asya bhrāturna ṛ tesaptathasya māyāḥ ||

He goes to end his work with lightning flashes: wide is the seat his **Asura** glory gives him.
With his Companions, not without his Brother, he quells Saptatha's magic devices

Comment: **Indra** is glorified as **Asura**.

Hymn dedicated to **Indra**

Rv-10.99,12: evā **maho asura** vakṣ athāya vamrakaḥ paḍ bhirupa sarpadindram |
sa iyānaḥ karati svastimasmā iṣ amūrjaṃsukṣ itim viśvamābhāḥ ||

So, swiftly **Asura**, for exaltation, hath the great Vamraka come nigh to Indra.
He will, when supplicated, bring him blessing: he hath brought all, food, strength, a happy dwelling.

Comment: **Indra** is described as the Great **Asura**.

Hymn dedicated to **Agni, Varuna, Soma and Indra**

Rv-10.124: In the said hymn, the term **Asura** occurs twice in the two different verses, but the

complete hymn has been discussed in detail separately.

Hymn addressed to **Indra**

Rv-10.131.4: yuvaṃ surāmamaśvinā namucāvāsure sacā |
vipipānāsubhas patī indraṃ karmasvāvatam ||

Ye, Asvins, Lords of Splendour, drank full draughts of grateful Soma juice,
And aided Indra in his work with Namuci of **Asura birth**.

Comment: Here **Namachi**, an enemy of the Priests has been designated as **Asura**.

Hymn dedicated to **Mitra Varuna**

Rv-10.132.4: asāvanyo asura sūyata dyaustvaṃ viśveṣ āṃvaruṇ āsirājā |
mūrdhā rathasya cākan naitāvatainasāntakadhruk ||

That other, **Asura!** too was born of Heaven. thou art, O **Varuna, the King of all men**.
The chariot's Lord was well content, forbearing to anger Death by sin so great.

Comment: The verse describes **Mitra** like **Varuna**, is the one heavenly born **Asura**.

Hymn addressed to **Indra**

Rv-10.138.3: vi sūryo madhye amucad rathaṃ divo vidad dāsaya pratimānamāryaḥ |
dṛ ṛ āṇpiprorasurasya māyina indro vyāsyaccakṛ vān ṛ jīśvanā ||

In the mid-way of heaven the Sun unyoked his car: the Arya found a match to meet
his Dam foe.
Associate with Rjisvan Indra overthrew the solid forts of **Pipru**, conjuring **Asura**.

Comment: Here, **Pipru Dasa**, a foe of the Priests is denoted as **Asura**.

Hymn dedicated to **Faith**

Rv-10.151.3: athā deva asureṣ uśraddhāmughreṣu cakrire |
evambhojeṣ u yajvasvasmākamuditam kṛ dhi ||

Even as the Deities maintained Faith in the **mighty Asuras**,
So make this uttered wish of mine true for the liberal worshippers.

Comment: The Singer informs us that even the **Gods** believe that there are some cruel/ very harsh
(**ugra**) **Asuras**, probably means the **aggressive Demonic characters** here.

Hymn addressed to **Visvedevas**

Rv-10.157.4: hatvāya devā asurān yadāyan devā devatvamabhirakṣ amāṇ āh ||

As when the Gods came, after they had slaughtered the **Asuras**, keeping safe their Godlike nature,

Comment: This verse gives clear signal that the **Gods** have come back to their places after killing the **Asuras / the real Demons**, as that was essential to safeguard their identity as the **Godheads**.

Hymn dedicated to **Surya**

Rv-10.170,2: vibhrāḍ br̥ hat subhr̥ taṃ vājasātamaṃ dharman divo haruṃ esatyamarpitam
amitrahā vṛ trahā dasyuhantamaṃ jyotirjajñasurahā sapatnahā ||

Radiant, as high Truth, cherished, best at winning strength, Truth based upon the statute that supports the heavens,

He rose, a light, that kills Vritras and enemies, best slayer of the Dasyus, **Asuras**, and **foes**.

Comment: In the said verse, **Surya** is defined as the slayer of the **Vritras** and the **Dasyus**, and both are termed as **Asuras /demonic characters** as well as the **Foes**.

Hymn addressed to **Mayabheda**

Rv-10.177,1: patamghamaktamasurasya māyayā hr̥ dā paśyanti manasāvipaścitaḥ |
samudre antaḥ kavayo vi cakṣ ate marīcīnāmpadamichanti vedhasaḥ ||

#The sapient with their spirit and their mind behold the Bird adorned with all an **Asura's magic** might.

Sages observe him in the ocean's inmost depth: the wise disposers seek the station of his rays.

Comment: In a mystical way, the Poet describes that as like mind of a bird, using his **great power of imagination**, he can swiftly travel or go to any unseen place, even can see the inner side of a sea through his powerful vision/wisdom. Here **Asura's maya** means **possession of the great power of imagination/wisdom/foresight by the rigvedic Poets**.

Additionally, there are two special verses present in the two different Early Mandalas which independently portray both **Indra** and **Agni** as **Asura-slayer**.

Hymn dedicated to **Indra**

Rv- 6.22,4: tan no vi voco yadi te purā cijjaritāra ānaśuḥ sumnamindra |
kaste bhāghaḥ kiṃ vayo dudhra khidvaḥ puruhūta purūvasoasuraghnaḥ ||

Tell thou us this, if at thy hand aforetime the earlier singers have obtained good fortune,
What is thy share and portion, Strong Subduer, **Asura-slayer**, rich, invoked of many?

Hymn addressed to **Agni**

Rv-7.13,1: prāghnaye viśvaśuce dhiyandhe.asuraghne manma dhītiṃ bharadhvam |
bhare havirna barhiṣ i prīṇ āno vaiśvānarāya yataye matīnām ||

Bring song and hymn to Agni, **Asura-slayer**, enlightener of all and thought-bestower.
Like an oblation on the grass, to please him, I bring this to Vaisvanara, hymn-inspirer.

Above two verses depict the two prominent gods of **Rigved**, **Indra** and **Agni** as the **asuraghnaḥ** / **asuraghne** / **Asura-slayer** means the killer of the **Foes** or **the characters who are the sworn enemies of the Priests/People**.

General Observations made on the Verses pertaining to the term “**Asura**”

1. The Gods like Indra, Agni, Varuna, Mitra, Rudra, Maruts, Savitar, Soma, Asvins, Surya etc are hailed as the “**Asuras**” in the several verses of the different mandalas composed by the different Poets.
2. Enemies like Vritra, Dasyus, Pipru, Namuchi Dasa etc who remained hostile towards the Priests throughout the rigvedic period are also termed as the “**Asuras**”
3. Female deities like Earth, Usha and Saraswati in some selected verses, based on their special characteristics are described to possess the qualities of the **Asuras**.
4. Mitra-Varuna combination has been described as **devānāmasurā**/ Gods among the **Asuras**.
5. Brihaspati is called as immortal God and **Asura**.
6. Yajna-kund/ Fire altar is called as father of Agni, and it is said that Agni is born in the abdomen of **Asura**.
7. Mitra, Varuna, and Savitar are jointly termed as **Asuras' Hero**.
8. Agni has been describes as “**Ila's Favorite Asura**”. This aspects proves the existence of a special attachment between “**Ila**” and “**Agni**” as projected by Visvamitra in the form of **इलामग्ने** /**il āmaghne** in Mandala-3.
9. Vritra is also identified as **Asuras' Hero**.
10. At one place, Soma-Rudra jointly designated as **Asura**.
11. Use of “**Devānāmasuratvamekam**” phrase in 22 verses of hymn Rv-3.55 means all Gods who are **Asuras** also, belong to one class (probably indicates “**Divine Beings**”).
12. The Poets from Angirasa's family describe themselves as the present generation **Asuras**. It means, the title “**Asura**” can be used by the next generation of the family.
13. King Bhavya who lives on the bank of river Sindhu, is denoted as **Asura**.
14. Indra and Agni are defined as the **Asuras** and the **Asura-slayers** too.
15. The verse Rv-10.157,4 clearly draws the boundary between the Gods and the **Asuras**. In other words, the clearcut division between the **Devas/Gods** and the **Asuras /Demons** actually began during the last phase of the composition of Mandala-10 itself, most

probably after the composition of the hymn Rv-10.124.

16. The verse Rv-10.170,2 highlights Vritra and Dasyus as the Asuras and the Foes too.

Then the basic question is “ **What is the meaning of rigvedic term “Asura”?**”

Several Scholars paid attention to rigvedic word “**Asura**” in the past and based on their in-depth analysis, came to the conclusion that it is a “**Title**” given by the rigvedic Poets to some selected imaginary characters, natural forces, and some living beings who as per them possess very special skills/qualities, surpassing the common men of that time. It is very similar to use of present-day titles /designations / special words like “**Guru**”, “**Pandit**”, “**Yogi**”, “**Ustaad**”, “**Calipha**”, “**Lord**”, “**Emperor**”, “**Superstar/ Superman**”, “**Sir**” (a Knighted person) etc that are pre-fixed (sometime suffixed) to the names of the persons to honor/admire their mastery/authority or awarded in recognition of the contributions made by them in the specific fields. It can also be termed as an “Honor” or “Respect” given by the Rigvedic Singers to the certain characters for some cause or for their **distinct attributes/inherent qualities** irrespective of their nature or role in **Rigved** whether the favorable ones or the opponents. It could have started much before the composition Rigvedic hymns, as early as from **Ila's** time (**Agni** has been defined as the favorite **Asura** of “**Ila**”).

Many rigvedic scholars have translated the Sanskrit term “ Asura” as “Lord”, “Mighty”, “Great”, “Vast” and on some occasions, some even used it to define some characters as “Almighty” as well.

Based on the information available in the Rigvedic hymns, there won't be anything wrong if we make a generalized statement that “ **All Gods are the real Asuras of Rigved, but all Asuras are not the Gods/Deities**”.

Many of these rigvedic characters seem to be the “ **Naturally Gifted Entities**”, or the “**Self-made**” and/or the “ **Self-luminous**” in their respective fields, and hence the rigvedic Priests have projected them in a **dignified manner** in the text, whether they are their friends or the foes.

III. Use of the term “Medha” in Rigved

As discussed elsewhere, it is believed by many that the archaic Sanskrit word “ **Medha**”, over a period of time, would have got modified to “**Mazda**” in **Avesta**. Hence, it would be interesting to know more about the use of “**Medha**” word in **Rigved**.

Monier William dictionary gives some meanings of the Sanskrit word “**Medha**” as “Wisdom”, “Intelligent”, “ Mental Power” etc.

A close look at the Rigvedic Text reveals the fact that there are many variants of the Sanskrit word “**Medha**” in it and some of them are described below.

In **Rigved**, the term **Medha** is found in several Mandalas, but especially in the Mandala-8 (one of the late Mandalas), in some verses, it has been used in conjunction with another Sanskrit term to coin a new word. For example, when it is combined with word “**Atithi**” to make a compound word, that gets reflected as name of a person in the composition as- “**Medhatithi**”. Additionally, when it is suffixed to word **Priya**, then becomes a new compound word “**Priya-Medha**” (similarly, “**Asva-Medha**” term found in **Mandala-5**).

In the verse of the Early Mandala, **Rv-3.58,2**; it is present as pitareva medhāḥ

In the verse of the Late Mandala, **Rv-8.52,9**; it is found as stoturmedhā

Its other derivatives are as follows.

Medha : **Rv-1.88**, ; 1,165.14

Medham: **Rv-1.18,6**;

Rv- 2.34,7

Rv- 5.27,4; 5.42,13

Rv-8.6,10

Rv- 9.9,9; 9.32,6; 9.107,25

Medhabhih: **Rv-9.65,16**

Medhakaram : **Rv-10.91,8**

Medhira : **Rv-1.25,20**

It means to say that the word “**Medha**” is present in the Early and the Late Mandalas of **Rigved** (both classes of **Rigved**), and hence it can be firmly said that similar to the term “**Asura**”, since beginning of the composition of **Rigved**, the term “**Medha**” is also a part and parcel of archaic **Rigvedic Sanskrit vocabulary**.

IV. Reality Check on the story of Indra from the Hymns of Mandala-8

Since the inception of **Rigved**, **Indra** is projected as the Supreme God, and the Villain or Demon in **Avesta**. Therefore, it is necessary to get the real wordy picture of **Indra** presented in the **Mandala-8** as this mandala connects rigvedic geography of both east and west sides of river **Sindhu**. Also the major part of this mandala was composed in the North-west corner of Indus Valley; the region located closer to the residence of the **Avestan People**, and it also contains several ancient foreign origin words those are not found in all the Early Mandalas. Hence, in all the probabilities, they would have come from the west part of the Indian sub-continent.

A. General Information on Indra in Mandala-8 of Rigved

1. Out of total **103** hymns of Mandala-8, about **52** hymns have been clearly devoted to **Indra** alone and **4** hymns are addressed to **him** alongside other Deities such as **Agni, Vac, Varuna** etc. This number includes **Vāḷakhilya Hymns** numbering 49 to 59. It constitutes dedication of more than 50% hymns to the Supreme Deity of **Rigved** in one mandala (with the exception of devotion of all 114 hymns of of Mandala-9 only to **Soma-Pavamana**, that would have occurred subsequently) which is unusual thing.
2. Among the **Ten Rigvedic Mandalas**, **Mandala-8** is the only mandala that begins with lauding **Indra**, means the very first hymn of this mandala is addressed to **Indra**. This may be attributed to victory of **Bharatas** over the **Ten Kings** during the period of Mandala-7, which might have been credited by the rigvedic Priests mainly to **Indra**.
3. Through the verse **Rv-8.6,10**, the Poet conveys that **Indra** has learned **eternal laws** from his “**Father**” and become well versed in them like the **Sun** (who acts as the eyes for God **Varuna**).

Rv-8.6,10: ahamid dhi **pituṣ** pari **medhām ṛ tasya**jaghrabha |
aham sūrya ivājani ||

(Griffith) # I from my **Father** have received deep **knowledge** of the **Holy Law**
I was born like unto the Sun.

As per the typical rigvedic myth, **Indra** and many other rigvedic Deities are born to the universal parents, **Heaven** (Father) and **Earth** (Mother). But the text also tells us that **Varuna** dwells in the **Heaven** and **He** was the **Prime Deity** of the ancestors of the Priests prior to entry of **Indra** on the vedic platform, who is still directly responsible for close monitoring of the regular activities of the world as per the **rta**; well established laws of nature. Based on the seniority of **Varuna**, the Singer probably intends here “**pituṣ**” for **Varuna** means the “**Father figure**” for **Indra** and not the **Heaven**.

B. Highlights on Indra, as mentioned in the Late hymns of Mandala-8 of Rigved:

The findings of investigation conducted about the most important rigvedic character **Indra** in the late hymns of **Mandala-8** are as given below.

Rv-8.52,7 : Never art thou neglectful: thou guardest both races with thy care.

The call on **Indra**, **fourth Aditya**! is thine own. Amṛta is established in the heavens.

Here, **Indra** is called as Fourth **Aditya**, which is a new thing. **Rv-8.18**, **Rv-8.47**, and **Rv-8.67** are the hymn dedicated to **Adityas**, wherein, we find the names of three original **Adityas**/ the well known rigvedic **Trio** in some verses; e.g.verses 2 and 4 of Rv-8.67. The earliest collective but

proper reference of three original **Adityas** of **Rigved** as **Mitra, Varuna, and Aryaman** is found in the hymn of the early mandala; **Rv-2.27**. These three Adityas are also termed as **Kshatriyas/ rulers** in the very first verse of the hymn-**Rv-8.67**. Why did the Composer declare **Indra** as the **Fourth Aditya** now? It clearly manifests that **among the Adityas, Indra** is junior to **Mitra, Varuna, and Aryaman, the famous trio**.

In Rv-8.76, along with **Indra, Maruts** have been mentioned in first 9 out of total 12 verses which is a very special thing. In the verse-3 the Singer mentions that first **Indra** takes on **Vritra**, and then **Maruts** assist **Indra** in bringing water of Samudra/sea (formation of tidal waves?).

In the verse **Rv-8.78,5** the Poet tells us that **Indra** can never be brought low, Sakra can never be subdued. He pays attention to all, (Griffith - heareth and beholdeth all). **What made the Poet to say so now? Was there any threat to the Supreme Position of Indra from anybody?**

Other important aspects of **Indra** mentioned in the late hymns of Mandala-8

Rv-8.93,15: Then he was my Defender, then, Invincible, **whose foe is not**,
The Vritra-slayer showed his might.

It indirectly conveys that as **Indra has already slayed Vritra means already solved the problem of water shortage, hence there is no known Enemy left in that region now**. It also manifests that there was no water scarcity in that region.

Rv-8.97,7: O **Indra, turn us not away**: be the companion of our feast.
For thou art our protection, yea, thou art our kin: O **Indra**, turn us not away.

The Poet requests Indra not to go away, be his partner in feast / Sacrifice and provide protection. Probably, availability of water was not an issue now, hence the Poets appeal to Indra not to leave them, but be there to give protection regularly.

A new question surfaces, **Was Indra's presence during Yajna being questioned by anyone?**

Rv-8.97,9: O Caster of the Stone, nor Gods nor mortals have attained to thee.
Thou in thy might surpaskest all that hath been made: the Gods have not attained to thee.

It means, **neither from the Gods nor from the Mortals, anyone can match or attain Indra's status**. Another question is, **What made the Composer to reiterate the stand of other Priests?**

Starting with the Hymn **Rv-8.89** to **Rv-8.100** (except hymn **Rv-8.94** that is dedicated to Maruts), in the several verses of these hymns addressed to **Indra**, different rigvedic composers have

repeatedly but unnecessarily highlighted **Indra** as the **Vritra slayer** when there was enough water available in that area, **why is it so?**

Verse **Rv-8.89,2** indicates that **the rigvedic Gods** (including **Maruts**) **are with Indra while killing Vritra**. But the verse **Rv-8.96,7** portrays that except **Maruts**, other Gods have gone away from **Indra**. **What does it mean?** This contradiction makes it apparent that there was disagreement between the two sections of the Priests about **Indra's very existence**, and hence his role as **Vritra-slayer** was doubted by some. It means to say, that some people would have discarded **Indra** completely, but accepted other rigvedic gods. **Who were those people?** Hence, there is a need to find out **Indra's opponents**.

The composer of Hymn **Rv-8.100** in the form of self-addressed questions through the verses number-3 and 4, specifically clears doubt about **Indra**; first asks “**Has anyone seen Indra?**”, and then poses a next question to himself as “**If Indra does not exist, then whom shall we laud?**”. It means, some persons would have cast doubt about the **Indra's existence** in the world, and the Singer has addressed the issue in his style. In the next verse, the Poet, on behalf of **Indra** answers the aforementioned question; “**Here I am**”, firmly attests **his presence**.

In the verse **Rv-8.100,5**; the Singer specifically points out that the **only rta believers** /**aruhanṛ tasyanekamāsīnaṃ** or **the firm followers of Varuna/ the other class of the Priests** go running to question **Indra** when **he** is resting on his back alone (**means sitting Idle**), and at that time, **his Friends (Other Gods)** shout/jeer/boo at him like the children make fun of their colleague (childish play) without understanding **him**. In other words, no one from the Gods comes to **Indra's** help when **his** presence is being questioned by the **followers of Varuna**.

The verse **Rv-8.100,7**; indicates that the character (**Vritra**) because of whom, **Indra** has to arrive in the world **is no more there**, means Drought/famine is absent in that locality now. Here the Poet assumes that probably, **Indra** has struck the vital part of **Vritra's** Body by his Vajra/Bolt, and that is why **Vritra** has disappeared from the scene (means **no Drought** to west of river **Sindhu**).

Suddenly, through the next two verses, numbering **Rv-8.100,10** and **11**, the Composer brings **Goddess Vac/Speech** in picture. A fresh question arises, what is the intention of the Poet here? Probably, when **Indra** was **verbally abused** by some people (undefined), just to console himself, the composer hints that as every herd of animals collectively makes vocal sound/creates some noise (make a typical noise), on the same line those people too would have created hue and cry about **Indra**. Hence, their utterances need not be taken seriously. The Singer indirectly informs us that the spoken words/Vac/Speech of the rigvedic Priests/Poets are very similar to milk of milching Cow (compared with Goddess Vac), means pure/uncorrupted but continuous flow of words like nourishment provided by milk of a cow which has capacity to fulfill hunger and vigour

as well. (Situation can be compared with the proverb “*The elephant keeps walking as the dogs keep barking*”).

The verse **Rv-8.89,5** intimates us **Indra** was specifically created to kill **Vritra** (to overcome Drought like condition prevailing there at that time), as there was no one from the earlier Gods willing to take on **Vritra** (means despite lauding of all earlier Gods, the issue of real Drought could not be resolved). Subsequently, actual **Yajna/Sacrifice ritual** (see **Rv-8.89,6**) was formulated just to praise **Indra** (composition of Song of joy/celebration of birth of Indra and slaying of Vritra) with kindling of **Fire/Agni** to strengthen **Indra's** Power. Thus **Indra**, the **Supreme God**, was the **ultimate creation** of the Pre-rigvedic Priests, believed to surpass all; **those who have already born and also those are yet to be born**. In other words, as per the beliefs of the Priests, among the all rigvedic characters, there is no parallel to **Indra**, who is incomparable, and unconquerable as well. Based on the information available in the verses **Rv-8.89,5** and **6**; the actual order of the three major pre-rigvedic events is as under.

- 1. Appearance of Vritra** : Real Drought like condition developed in the area (Sapt-Sindhu region) where the ancestors of the rigvedic Priests were living.
- 2. Creation of Indra**: As Old Pre-rigvedic Deities failed to meet the challenge posed by **Vritra**, that culminated into creation of special Warrior God **Indra** to counter the effect of **Vritra/Drought**.
- 3. Formulation of Yajna**: **Yajna ritual** was specifically shaped to praise **Indra** and other Deities to get some favour from the Deities/People that includes overcoming the effect of Vritra, used later on for obtaining the gifts like cows and other animals, the precious metal; gold, victory in the wars etc.

Now, keeping above things in the back of our mind, we need to focus our attention on the selected verses from the **very special Hymn Rv-8.96** (Griffith Translation) that are given below.

Rv-8.96,7: Flying in terror from the snort of Vritra, **all Deities who were thy friends forsook thee**.
So, **Indra**, be thy **friendship with the Maruts**: in all these battles thou shalt be the victor.

Rv-8.96,9: A sharpened weapon is the host of Maruts. Who, **Indra**, dares withstand thy bolt of thunder?
Weaponless are the Asuras, the **godless**: scatter them with thy wheel, Impetuous Hero.

Rv-8.96,13: The **Black Drop** sank in **Amsumati's** bosom, advancing with **ten thousand** round about it.
Indra with might longed for it as it panted: the hero-hearted laid aside his weapons.

Rv-8.96,15: And then the **Drop** in **Amsumati's** bosom, splendid with light, assumed its **proper body**;
And **Indra**, with **Brhaspati** to aid him, **conquered the godless tribes** that came against him.

Rv-8.96,16: Then, **at thy birth**, thou wast the **foeman, Indra**, of those the **seven** who ne'er had met a rival.
The hidden Pair, the Heaven and Earth, thou foundest, and to the mighty worlds thou gavest
pleasure.

Rv-8.96,19: Most wise is he, rejoicing in libations, splendid as day, **resistless in his anger**.
He only doth great deeds, the **only Hero, sole Vrtra-slayer he, with none beside him**.

As described earlier, in the verse **Rv-8.96,7**; the Singer underlines the fact that, except **Maruts**, no other God is with **Indra**, and **almost all Gods have deserted him**. Even the verse **Rv-8.96,19** tells the similar story, **Indra** the **Vritra-slayer** is **now alone/sole**, no one alongside him (not even **Matuts** are with **him** now). Then a new question crops up, **What does it mean?**

Now, first take a close look at the verses, **Rv-8.96,13-14**. Griffith has translated the word **Krishna** present in these verses as **black** (indicating color). The word **Krishna** possibly indicates **negativity about God Indra** or symbolically indicates that some people were in **dark** about miraculous **Indra/** means **ignorant about Indra and his acts**. Even it could be the name of a **Sage** who strongly opposes **Indra**. Once we consider word **Krishna** as a name of Priest or a person who hates **Indra**, (**Krishna** of the hymn **Rv-8.96** may be different person/poet from the Poet **Krishna**, a name mentioned in the two verses of hymn **Rv-8.85** dedicated to **Asvins**, but has to be from the clan other than Angirasa's Family), then a new picture emerges, a group of the Priests led by **Krishna** who does not believe in **Indra** standing opposite to the rigvedic Priests who have firm faith in **Indra**, on the bank of river **Amshumati** (possibly, a western tributary of river **Sindhu**).

Note: “The **Black Drops**” phrase used by Griffith, if understood very similar to the modern-day commonly used idioms like, “the **Black Sheep**”, or “the **Moles**” or “**Thorn in flesh**”, then the “**Black Drops**” phrase in the verses **Rv-8.96,13 to 15** may manifest the opponents of the Priests.

Through the verse; **Rv-8.96,15**, the Poet explains that with the help of **Brihaspati, Indra** could defeat the **godless tribes** that attacked **him/Indra**. In other words, here the Supreme God **Indra** alone is not capable to conquer his opponents, but now **He** specifically needs **Brihaspati's** assistance to win the battle. Sudden entry of **Brihaspati** in the troubled scenario raises a fresh question, “ **at this juncture, why does the Composer remember Brihaspati alone, and no other God like Visnu or Maruts?** Going back to **Mandala-2**, wherein we find four hymns (**RV-2.23 to Rv-2.26**) dedicated to **Bhrahmanaspati**, clearly describing the said character as the immortal God, the great High Priest, wisest among the all wise characters, controller of the hymns or has mastery over the spoken words, hates double tongued person, **an ally of Indra** who is an expert in subduing the **Godless People**. It practically means, with better knowledge, understanding and wisdom,

verbally (in an oral fight or debate or argument), the rigvedic Priests are able to defeat their opponents in a **conflict** (its a Poet's version). Despite having **Vajra/Thunder-bolt**, fantastic **Indra** could not become the **Victor**, means it is surely not an **Imaginary Physical clash**, but a **Real Vocal confrontation** (a dogfight), and hence the Rigvedic Priests needed **the best “Word Power”** to defeat their rivals. That is why, the Poet intentionally engages only **Brihaspati** in the verse to make use of his reputation of tactfully defeating the opponents of his friend, **Indra**.

The verse; **Rv-8.96,16** conveys a very old story, that is, a similar situation had also prevailed at the time of the birth of **Indra**. During pre-rigvedic time, when **Indra** was shaped through several brain-storming sessions (probably under the influence of Soma juice by the Earliest Angirasa and other senior pre-rigvedic Priests), he was immediately opposed by a group of **Seven** Characters (unidentified, but all belonging to one class, indicating similarity in behavior as the regular trouble creators) who had no known enemy at that time, but immediately after birth, **Indra** became their first foe. In other words, since **his** birth, God **Indra** is very familiar with an antagonism or hostility towards **him** in the pre-rigvedic society.

Then the fundamental question comes up, **Is there any evidence in the hymn to justify the people who opposed Indra, were also from the Priestly community?**

And the answer to above question is “**Yes**”. The verse; **Rv-8.96,9** clearly points out that those persons who oppose **Indra** are **anāyudhāso asurā adevā/ Weaponless, Godless Asuras**. Had they been from the warrior class, then they would have been described as the people having some weapons. The Poet has called them **Godless** probably, because at that point of time, they firmly refused to accept the supremacy of **Indra, the ultimate Storm and war God and King of the kings**. Since the Singer has specifically termed them as **Asuras**, they must be having some special characteristic features, better than the common people, a special class of the persons/humans. As we have seen earlier, the members of **Angirasa** family are designated as the **Asuras** as well. Therefore, the Rigvedic **Priests/Poets** can only meet the criterion of the phrase; “**Weaponless Asuras**”. It seems that there was a “**wordy war**” between the two opposing sides on the bank of river **Amshumati**, and **Indra** was the main reason for that fight.

Going back to **Mandala-7**, wherein it has been mentioned that the **Ten Kings** who oppose Bharata king **Sudas**, specifically described by the Poet as “**anIndra/Indra-less**” (refer to verse **Rv-7,18,16**). Additionally, the verse **Rv-7.83,7** indicates that the **Ten Kings** do not worship **Indra** and **Varuna** as well, means perform **no Yajna**. The combination of the **Ten Kings** does include the

“**Five Tribes of Nahusha/Nahusa- Anus, Druhyus, Purus, Turvasas, and Yadus**”. In spite of belonging to a **club of Five who were originally non-believers of Indra**, but being from the warrior class, the Leaders of the Five Tribes would not qualify as the “**Weaponless Asuras**” of the said verse. Hence, there is an imperative need to know the real “**Weaponless Asuras**” who strongly objected existence of **Indra**.

Throughout the rigvedic period, **Indra** remains favorite god of the members of the **Angirasa family**. As per the well known rigvedic myth, it is **Indra** who locates and rescues the “**Cows of Angirasa**”. Hence, there is no possibility of the direct descendants of **Rishi Angirasa** and their close associates opposing **Indra** any time (also see verse **Rv-6.74,4** for unhappiness about **Varuna**).

Therefore, we need to probe the role of **Bhrugus**, the second most important family of the Rigvedic Priests in the various mandalas of **Rigved**.

Mandala-wise Data [2] on the terms **Bhrugu** and **Bhrigus** compiled from the Ten Rigvedic Mandalas are given below.

Bhrugu / Bhrigus : 1(7), 2(1), 3(2), 4(3), 6(1), 7(1), 8(6), 9(1), 10(6)

Observations on the Above Data:

1. In **Mandala-5**, the term **Bhrugu** or **Bhrigus** is totally absent.
2. Five out of six references of the word **Bhrugu** or **Bhrigus** present in the three out of five Early Mandalas, i.e., Mandala-2, 3, and 4; clearly exhibit their close connection with God **Agni**. **Rv-4.16,20** is the only reference that links **Bhrigus** with **Indra**.
3. Even in **Mandala- 6** verse (**Rv-6.15,2**), the **Bhrigus** are linked to God **Agni**, but it actually reflects the story of past.
4. In **Mandala-9**, (verse **Rv-9.101,13**), “**Bhrugu's son**” a phrase is used to describe flow of Soma juice, casually mentioned, just quoted as an example.
5. In **Mandala-7**, at the time of the War of the Ten Kings, the Composer has clearly identified the **Bhrigus** in friendship with **Druhyus**, (**Rv-7.18,6**), but on the opposite side of Bharata King Sudas. It means, earlier to Mandala-7, the **Bhrigus** would have moved away from the other prominent rigvedic Priests (Angirases and their close partners) , and settled in the **Druhyus'** land (probably located in the south-west corner of Sindhu Valley). Hence, the shift in their loyalty from **Bharata** to **Druhyu** side is clearly visible.

6. As compared to other mandalas, in **Mandala-8**, **1**, and **10** (three Late Mandalas); there are more references of **Bhrgu/Bhrgus**. It also means, during the period of Mandala-8, not all **Bhrgus** did become the rebels. Only a section of them would have revolted against the establishment, and left the rigvedic Priestly community and the locality (North-west corner of Indian Sub-continent) as well by crossing the present-day Khyber Pass.

Please note that, as per account of the Mandala-4, **Vamadeva**, the lead composer of Mandala-4, when visited the extreme North-west corner of the Indian Sub-continent (signalled by river **Rasa**), did not come in direct contact with **Anus** and/or **Druhyus** anywhere, anytime in that territory located to west of river **Sindhu**. One possibility is, when **Vamadeva** explored the North-west region of Indus Valley for better living conditions, at the same time, **Bhrgus** would have gone to South-west area of Indus Valley (Druhyus' country), and got settled there. Therefore, they do not figure in **Mandala-5**, informally indicated in **Mandala-6**, but actively present with **Druhyus** on the bank of river **Parusni**, at the time of the **War of Ten Kings**. It should be noted here that the **Druhyus** along with **nine other kings** are termed as “**an-Indra/ Indra-less/ Indra-denier**” by the composer of Mandala-7. Having lived with **Druhyus** for sometime, the **Bhrgus** would have lost love for **Indra**, but continued their association with God **Agni**. Hence, it is most likely that some of them would have questioned the existence of **Indra** and forcefully opposed the frequent glorification of **Indra** during the late period of **Mandala-8**.

Another reason could be, on the west side of river **Sindhu**, due to presence of several snow laden peaks of the western mountain, there was no scarcity of water, and unlike the rivers of eastern region located alongside river **Saraswati** which had gone dry, the western tributaries of the river **Sindhu** would be flowing regularly, bringing water throughout the year. Hence, some senior Priests would have felt that the character **Indra** has no role in providing regular water in the rivers of that region. Therefore, those Priests would have come to the conclusion that there is no point in worshipping **Indra**, and giving several sacrifices including animals (human sacrifice on some special occasions) in **his** name. This aspect would have led to heated verbal exchanges on the bank of river **Amshumati** between the two parties of the Priests, one led by **Angirasa** clan, and other guided by the Senior Priest from **Bhrgus** family (probably, **Krishna** may be name of a **Rival Priest** from Bhrgu clan, mentioned in the verse; **Rv-8.96,13**). Finally, a section of the **Bhrgus** who firmly opposed **Indra**, and some other Priests would have decided to move out of the Indus Valley, and gone to present-day Afghanistan through the Khyber Pass.

As per the available information from the various mandalas of **Rigved** on the use of the term

“**Asura**”, among the human beings, the **Highly Gifted Poets from the Priestly community are the best suited candidates to be identified as the “Weaponless Asuras”**. Additionally, after **Mandala-8 of Rigved**, as there is no **active reference** about the **Anus** in other three late Mandalas (Mandala-9, 1, and 10), hence there is a strong possibility of the tribe of **Anus** going out of the **Indus Valley** along with the dejected Priests.

V. **Factuality of “Varuna” as described in Mandala-8**

In the earlier paragraphs, we have seen, how the rigvedic Poets have treated the mythical character **Indra**. Now we shall see, in **Mandala-8**, how the different Singers have projected **Varuna** in it.

In Mandala-8, there is only one hymn **Rv-8.41** purely dedicated to **Varuna** and other hymn; **Rv-8.42** is partly addressed to **Varuna** and partly to **Asvins**. Additionally, **he** has been referred to as one of the active members of the group of the **Early Adityas** in the three hymns dedicated to **Adityas**, **Rv-8.18**; **Rv-8.47**; **Rv-8.67** and in the hymns devoted to **Visvedevas** also. Furthermore, hymn **Rv-8.25** is partly addressed to **Mitra-Varuna duo**, and **Rv-8.59**, the last **Valakhilya** hymn has been addressed to **Indra-Varuna** combine.

- In the hymn **Rv-8.41**, the Composer has described **Varuna** as the Protector, the Leader, the Ruler of the world, the Measurer, the Upholder of Eternal laws. **He** has been specifically portrayed as the **Wisdom Giver**. **He** also controls the seven sisters.
- Hymn **Rv-8.42** expresses **Varuna** as the Lord of wealth, **Asura** who lives in Heaven and guards the Immortal things. The Poet requests **Varuna** to provide protection and sharpen his poetic skill as well.
- In the three hymns dedicated to **Adityas**, i.e., **Rv-8.18**; **Rv-8.47**; and **Rv-8.67**, the Singers appeal to **Varuna**, **other Adityas** and their mother **Aditi** too to give them and their children a protective cover or proper shelter to safeguard them from the various enemies, illness etc. They also requests them to bring peace and happiness in their life.
- In Hymn dedicated to **Indra-Varuna (RV-8.59)**, no special thing is present about **Varuna**.
- Surprisingly, in Mandala-8 there is no **complete** hymn dedicated to **Mitra-Varuna** combine as found in other mandalas. But the hymn **Rv-8.25** has been addressed partly to **Mitra-Varuna** and partly to **Visvedevas**, in the verse-4 the duo have been designated as **Devasura**.
- Additionally, in the verse **Rv-8.83,2**; along with **Mitra** and **Aryaman**, the Composer has

described **Varuna** as the up-grader of the knowledge/wisdom through the regular experience.

From the above information, it is very clear that the Composers of **Mandala-8** did not treat **Varuna** at par with **Indra**, and gave much less importance to **him** in the mandala, but unnecessarily kept praising **Indra** for no authentic reason.

VI. Significance of the Hymn Rv-10.124

Hymn Rv-10.124 is one of the strangest hymns of Rigvedic compositions. In the following paragraphs, we shall take an intense look at the hymn so as to reveal the intricacy present in it.

The said hymn has been composed by the Poet in such a way that **as if**, he has witnessed the conversation between the God **Indra** and three important Rigvedic Deities namely, **Agni, Varuna** and **Soma**. Here the Composer presents himself as the pleader of **Indra**, portrays wordy picture as if, someone has already sidelined or sacked **Indra** from his earlier position of the **Supreme Deity**, taken away the **Old Gods** with him, and now desperate **Indra** wants to win over **his Old Friends** to **his** side, so that **he** would not feel purposely left alone in the Rigvedic World. On behalf of **Indra**, through this hymn, the Poet appeals to **Agni, Varuna**, and **Soma**, three Main Rigvedic Deities to come to the side of **Indra**. In the form of contents of the **nine verses**, one by one, in the typical rigvedic style, the Composer gives explanations about the same, that has been described below.

The **very first verse** of the hymn informs us that there was a very long duration darkness/break (**dīrgham tama**) in the field of **Agni** worship, means due to some unknown reasons, **Yajna/Sacrifice** was not conducted for several days. Hence, the Singer as if asks a question to God **Agni**, “**where were you for so many days?**”, and then invites **Him** to join the rite.

In the **second verse**, **Agni** explains **his** version of the story that, **he** being immortal God, was secretly taken away by the **Godless (People?)/ adevād devaḥ pracatā ghuhā**, who kept him in their custody/ghuhā, and for sometime **he** was with **the strangers**, leaving his **own Friends**.

Third verse explains that sometime back, when **Agni** was with the **People of Other Lineage**, there **he** noticed that they have framed their own set of rules (established/formulated different ways of worship). Finally, **he** decided to bid the farewell to **Father Asura/ pitre asurāya**

(their **Great God**), and switched over from the side of **non-sacrificial** way of worship to **sacrificial method**. In other words, the **People of Other Lineage** who too performed **Yajna**, but had stopped offering sacrifices in the ritual. It means, their **Yajna** was different from the rigvedic Priests.

In the **forth verse**, **Agni** presents the case that, **he** had to spend many days in those altars (where no sacrifices were given), eventually left that **Father (Asura)**, and chose **Indra**.

Fifth verse is composed by the Poet in such a way that, as if **Indra** is presenting **his** views, that “those **Asuras** (the **Lords of Other Lineage**) have already lost their **Maya/Magic Power/Special Status**, hence **Varuna** who loves **him** (Indra), should come to **his** side as the Lord, and once again rule **his** kingdom, as usual”.

Through the **sixth verse**, the Composer highlights presence of active freedom to all in **his (Indra's)** region, indicated by existence of light/Sun in the sky/heaven, meaning thereby bright sunshine / clear visibility/ openness everywhere/ an independent role to all with proper recognition of the work-done; presence of wide mid-space with moving air means, there is no restriction on anyone for movement or expression of views, including the freehand given to regular rigvedic enemy **Vritra** (Drought-like condition prevailing in that region) as well. Through this verse, the Poet tries to convey that due to the dominant nature of **Father Asura; Soma, Agni and Varuna** have to work under several restrictions there. But, in **Indra's** realm, as there is no control, everyone has freedom to do whatever likes to do. Hence, **Indra** requests **Soma** to come together so that, through the oblation of **Soma** (Yajna rite), jointly they would slay **Vritra**. It again hints that **Indra** can not live without **Soma**, as both remained inseparable throughout the Rigvedic Period. It also intimates us that **Soma** was also with the **Strangers/the People of Other lineage**.

In the **seventh verse**, the Poet says that **Indra** has refixed **Real Wisdom/ Varuna** in Heaven, means restored or reinstated the earlier **Power of Varuna** in the Heaven, who for sometime had gone to other side (**People of Other Lineage**). Now, **Indra** desires from **Varuna** that without expecting more power, **he** can take necessary action to release water in the Rivers, means would start discharging his responsibilities of the past. In the second line of the verse, here, the Poet has quoted example of regular quarrel among the women-folk (or frequent fights among the many wives of a man, where each-one tries to impress upon others that she is the most-liked/favorite wife of her husband), indirectly indicating that instead of wasting time in fighting with each other to show supremacy over one another or closeness to **Indra**, there is an imperative need of the Earlier Gods who have different divine powers, first to make peace among themselves, and then join

together to defeat **Vritra /Drought** to bring prosperity in the region. As a typical **rigvedic twist**, seventh verse exhibits a strong possibility of a clash between two opposing groups in the past, one Priestly group would have been clearly against the supremacy of **Indra**, but believed that the **Old Gods** such as **Varuna, Agni** were more important than **Indra**. Other Priestly group firmly held that among the all Deities of that period, there was no one better than **Indra**, and hence **his** authority should not be questioned. The Priestly people who discarded **Indra** as the Supreme Deity would have left the territory a long ago where the Rigvedic People would be living at that time, and after sometime, they would have become unknown persons to the new generations of the Rigvedic Priests. Therefore, in Griffith translated hymn; **Rv-10.124**, we find the special terms like the **Strangers** or the **People of Other lineage** addressing those **foreign people** who too perform ritual similar to rigvedic **Yajna**, but in a different fashion. This parallel but contradictory aspect would have come to know to some members of Younger Generation of the Rigvedic Priests lately, and the situation prevailing at that time would have inspired one of them to compose the hymn; **Rv-10.124**.

Through the **Eighth verse**, the Singer explains that the **Old Gods (Agni, Varuna)** have finally accepted the superiority and vigour of **Indra** and chose **him** as their **Leader**, very similar to the people from a royal family elect their new ruler/king (based on presence of very special characteristics in the individual), and now moved away from the mentality of **Vritra** (represents hostile behavior towards **Indra**/the Priests or the living beings) and came to the side of **Indra**.

In the **last verse (ninth)** of the hymn, the Composer gives an example, as Hamsa/Swan/Goose moves swiftly in the abhorrent floods of celestial waters (**Varuna's Domain**), similarly **Indra** has also overcome the troubled situation/amicably resolved the issue of strained relationship and now re-established friendship with **Varuna** (and other Gods).

Note: Before framing any opinion, the readers are requested to go through the different translations of the hymn; **Rv-10.124** made by the several scholars earlier, but do not forget to use **Simple Logic**, and **Common Sense** wherever applicable, while understanding the same.

Above explanation definitely poses a series of questions about the intention of the Composer while composing the said hymn, and the situation prevailing over there at that time such as **imaginary separation** between **Indra**, and other three rigvedic Gods; **Agni, Varuna, Soma** trinity/combination due to some unknown reason.

Some relevant questions pertaining to the hymn **Rv-10.124** are given below.

1. Why did the Poet mention a long break (**dīrgham tama**) in Agni worship?
2. Why did the Singer appeal to Agni, Varuna, and Soma to join Indra?
3. Why did the composer use phrase “**adevād devaḥ pracatā**”?
4. Who is the ultimate authority, “**pitre asurāya/Father Asura**” of the strangers?
5. Other than the Rigvedic Priests, who were the people worshiped **Agni** in a different manner ? How different their method of worship was? Where did those People live?
6. Why did the Poet indicate that the “**Asuras lost their Power of Magic**”? Who were those “**Asuras**”? How did they loose their Power?
7. Why did the Singer comment that “**Agni** has left **his Father**” for Indra?
8. Why did the Poet tell **Varuna** to understand difference between truth and untruth?
9. Why did the Sage highlight that “Indra has fixed the wisdom (Varuna) in Heaven”?
10. Why did the Poet say that the “Old Gods have left Vritra's side and joined Indra”?

The aforementioned questions definitely necessitate us to go back to the basics to know the original intention of the rigvedic Priests for use of the word “**Asura**” and also make us to revisit the story of “**Verbal War**” between the two opposing camps of the Priests presented in the hymn **Rv-8.96** in the Poetic style, but actually described in the form of a typical **rigvedic riddle**. The process of the total rejection of some rigvedic Deities, and their demonization by the rebels would have begun after their separation from the hardcore rigvedic Priests when the latter boycotted them, and then excommunicated from the community.

Please note that in **Mandala-10**, there is one reference of **Mujavata** mountain (**Rv-10,34,1**) which was probably located outside the **Indus Valley**, maybe in present-day country Afghanistan or Iran where the best quality of **Soma** plants were naturally grown; about ten references of **Gandharva** term denoting area west of the rigvedic territory; and four references of river **Rasa** that probably flowed in the Extreme North-west corner of Indian Sub-continent bordering modern-day Afghanistan. The rigvedic Priests would have come to know about the philosophy of the **Strangers** either through the traders or some of them would have gone there to enjoy **Soma** juice.

The most striking feature of the hymn; **Rv-10.124** from the last mandala of **Rigved** is, if observed minutely, and re-evaluated seriously in the proper context, then it provides some hints about the beginning of the process of the **change over** or **reclassification** of some Important Rigvedic Deities from their old time status as the universal **Asuras** to pure **Devas** and the subsequent categorization of the remaining **Asuras** as the evil forces/demons.

VII. Linking the content of hymn Rv-8.96 with the content of hymn Rv-10.124

As discussed earlier in detail, when the content of the hymn **Rv-8.96** addressed to **Indra** (also several other verses of the late hymns of **Mandala-8**), is specifically compared with the content of hymn **Rv-10.124** dedicated to **Indra, Agni, Varuna, Soma**, then we find that the characters mentioned as the “**Black Drops**” in the verses **Rv-8.96,13-15** could be the people who rejected **Indra** as the Supreme God during the late period of **Mandala-8**, and the descendants of the those Rebels got reflected as the real **Strangers** mentioned in the hymn **Rv-10.124**. The ancestors of these Strangers, probably after a quarrel with the Hardcore Priests would have moved out of rigvedic territory first, and subsequently established themselves in the locality outside the Indus Valley, reformulated **Yajna** worship in their new place of residence, but someway different from the rigvedic people, and intentionally portrayed **Indra** as the **Demon**. After a few centuries, they would have termed “**Angirasa Manyu**” (**Indra**, the god of **Angirases**) as the “**Angra Mainyu**”; an evil spirit which is in the line of the views about **Indra** as **Demon** in some Avestan literature.

It is very interesting to note that, in the **Old Avestan text (Gathas)**, there is no mention of God **Maruts** or the divine character having properly matching characteristics of this Deity or the Avestan Deity exactly equivalent to Rigvedic God **Maruts**. However, names similar to two Rigvedic wind Gods; **Vata** and **Vayu** are very much found in the Avestan literature. But the most striking feature here is, through the verse, **Rv-8.96,7** the Composer actually tells a mythical story, poetically explains that, except **Maruts**, **several other Gods** have already left the company of **Indra** (probably indicates, they were taken away or accepted by the people who opposed **Indra**).

Through the nine verses of hymn **Rv-10.124**; the Poet tries to win over **Agni, Varuna**, and **Soma**, the three important Rigvedic Gods from the **Alien Tribe** to **Indra's** side means their side, but in this hymn also God **Maruts** do not figure at all.

Exactly, these three rigvedic Gods who are described to be with the **Foreigners** earlier (as per the description given in hymn; **Rv-10.124**), are the most prominent characters found in the **Avestan Philosophy**, as explained in **Table-1** below.

Table-1

Name of the Rigvedic Character	Equivalent Avestan Name
Varuna	Ahura Mazda
Agni	Azar/Atar (fire)
Soma	Haoma

Important Point : **Indra** is on the side of the **rigvedic Priests** and not with the **Alien Tribe**.

Since inception of **Rigved**, several Composers of different hymns have purposely identified, **God Varuna** as the “**Wise Asura**”, who firmly believes in the the basic principle, what we commonly say today as, “**Seeing is believing**”. It means, **God Varuna** does not go by the past history blindly, but keeps updating his knowledge/understanding with time as highlighted by the composer of verse **Rv-8.83,2**. As per the rigvedic philosophy, **He** is the best suited character to judge the activities of **All** including the Deities, the Demons, and the living beings. Well before the birth of **Indra**, **Varuna** has only and specifically been authorized to uphold the **Cosmic laws/rta** that remains unquestionable during the entire period of **Rigved** as well, and nowhere in the text, this special power of **Varuna** has either been totally transferred to **Indra** anytime or diluted purposely due to some reason. In this way, **Varuna**, who lives in heaven along with **Mitra** remains as the undisputed **Lord of Universe of Rigved**. Based on his seniority, **Varuna** only can meet the criterion of the phrase **pitre asurāya/Father Asura**” of the verse **Rv-10.124,3**. Therefore, **Varuna** is the actual “**Asura Medha/Ahura Mazda/ Wise Lord and the Supreme Ruler of all worlds** mentioned in **Avesta**.

It should also be borne in mind that in **Avesta**, there is only one **Asura** who is called as **Asura Medha/Ahura Mazda**, but in **Rigved**, there are many **Asuras** including the Deities, the Demons (Enemies of the Priests), selected/gifted Human Beings too. That is why, in the verse **Rv-10.124,5**; the Composer intentionally tells that “**Several Rigvedic Characters who were termed as the Asuras earlier, have Lost their Magic Power or the Special Status/Title when they went to the Strangers**”. Additionally, in **Rv-10.124,6**, the Singer intimates us that in **Indra's** rule there is no restriction, but freedom to all which is not the case of “**Father Asura's kingdom**.” It means, **Father Asura's place** is totally “One Man Show or One Pillar Tent”.

The probable factors that would have caused dissent among the Rigvedic Poets during the period of composition of the last part of **Mandala-8** are listed below.

1. No scarcity of water to west of river Sindhu as that of river Saraswati :

After the **War of Ten Kings**, the Rigvedic Priests initially spent some time in Puru's country, and personally saw that the Purus' live on the bank of river **Saraswati** (in the towns located on its bank in the upstream area, present-day Haryana state) only when that area receives sufficient rains (denoted as “the **Grassy Banks**” by the Poet), means in the rainy season only. Having experienced shortage of water in and around river **Saraswati**, during the 2nd phase of Mandala-5, the Priests relocated themselves to west of river **Sindhu**.

During the composition of the early part of Mandala-8, when the Composer visits the region located around river **Saraswati**, he notices that though King Chitra and other small kings (**Verses Rv-8.21,17 to 18**), still live on **her** bank, but have to manage with insufficient quantity of water. Therefore, the Composer requests **Indra** to provide water through the act of Parjanya/Rain in that area. But no where in **Mandala-8**, any Composer has described the condition of the river **Sindhu** and her western tributaries on the similar line. In other words, to west of river **Sindhu**, though that area would also be receiving insufficient rains, but the river **Sindhu** and **her** western tributaries would be flowing almost throughout the year as they were fed by the melting of snow present on the North-west Mountains. Hence, there was no paucity of water to west of river **Sindhu**. The Verse **Rv-8.93,15** tells us that **Indra** has no enemy left now in that regions. Hence, in reality, there is **no work** left for **Magnificent Indra** in that region to kill **Vritra** or **Ahi for getting water released in the rivers of that area**. The verses **Rv-8.100,5** and **Rv-8.100,7** convey the same.

2. Absence of War like Situation during Mandala-8:

Based on the descriptions available in the three Early Mandalas i.e., Mandala-4, 6 and Mandala-7, on some occasions, the Kings of Bharata clan fight the local battles with the different members of the Five tribes, and then comes the ultimate war known as the **War of Ten kings** on the bank of river **Parusni** in the Seventh Mandala (also war with king **Bheda** and his friends on the bank of river **Yamuna**). After this, in Mandala-5 and Mandala-8, there is no direct reference to a major war between any two warrior tribes. In fact, the **Pakthas** who opposed king **Sudasa** in **Mandala-7**, are depicted to have attended the **Yajnas** and brought the tributes for the Priests in **Mandala-8**. Therefore, the Supreme God **Indra** has no assignment to prove **himself** as the **Mighty War God** to assist the Warrior class people in achieving the victory in the war.

3. Marginalization of Varuna by the Composers of Mandala-8:

Above two factors make it apparent that in **Mandala-8**, **Indra** has no real work left to prove **his** earlier credentials as the **Ultimate Storm and War God** of the Priestly Community. Still, Mandala-8 begins with the very first hymn glorifying **Indra** which is not seen in any rigvedic mandala composed earlier. In spite of these ground realities, more than 50% of the total 103 hymns of this mandala have been devoted to **Indra** for **his no contribution in any form or no work**. It practically means, in **Mandala-8**, **Indra** actually gets transformed from an **Ideal God** (of the Early Mandalas) to an **Idle God** (see comments on verses **Rv-8.100,5** and **Rv-8.100,7**). In the present context, it can also be described as **Indra's transition from a well known phrase, Hero to Zero**.

As per the pre-rigvedic philosophy, God **Varuna** is the all time Master/Emperor/Monarch

of the Universe, and has **regular work** to look after the implementation of rta/truth/eternal laws, and the land based water management. Even if there is **no rain** or **no war**, still **Varuna** needs to discharge his prime duties or regularly run the show of the universe as per the laid down procedure. But the Singers of the Mandala-8 do not give due respect to **Him**, as they are more inclined towards their favorite deity **Indra** despite the fact that the latter has no hand in bringing the improvement in the living conditions prevailed at that time to west of river **Sindhu** as compared to East side.

The treatment meted out to **Varuna** as the **Secondary God** would have definitely annoyed a section of the Priests who first raised the voice (as described by the Poet in the verse **Rv-8.100,10** that a herd of animals collectively make a typical sound) about the unwarranted glorification of **Indra**, and when they saw that there is no change in the attitude of the **Orthodox Priests**, then finally decided to revolt against the establishment. But the **Hardliner Priests** would have systematically isolated them by calling the rebelled group as the “**Black Drops**” (similar to the **Black Sheep**) in the **Amsumati** river and excommunicated them as well. After sometime, the **Dejected Priests** would have left the Rigvedic territory along with **Anu** Tribe, and settled in present-day Afghanistan first, formed the New Philosophical Culture in which only **Varuna** is given the status of the **Prime Deity** as “**Asura Medha**”, and purposely projected **Indra** as the Demon.

Before the start of the composition of **Rigved**, it is the declaration of **Indra** as the **Supreme Deity and the King of all Kings**, that would have led to the confrontation between King **Nahusa** and the **ancestors of rigvedic Priests**. Again during the last phase of **Mandala-8**, unrealistic lauding of **Indra** for **doing nothing**, would have caused the major split in the Priestly Community.

In short, since **his** birth, **Indra** remained controversial figure for some of the members of the Vedic society. As **Indra** was the brain-child of the Pre-rigvedic Priests, the people who opposed **Indra** were definitely, either from the **Royal Families** (**Nahusa** and the **Five Tribes**) or from the **Priestly families** (a section of **Bhrgus** and **other Priests** who became the strong opponents of **Indra** during the last phase of Mandala-8).

Probably, just to avoid the controversies, the Composers of **Mandala-9**, though lived in the Extreme North-west corner of Indian Sub-continent for a long time, but chose a different path, glorified **Soma** plant, extraction of its juice and the process of purification, totally dedicated that mandala to **Soma** and made it as **Soma Pavamana Mandala**. In Mandala-9, other than **Soma**, the Composers did not give a **special treatment to any rigvedic Deity, any river, any tribe too**. In **Mandala-9**, other than **Soma**, no one has been given the status of “**Asura**”.

In the two hymns of **Mandala-1**, (the next Mandala in order of composition) dedicated to **Varuna**, we find the tone of the Composer of the hymns **Rv-1.24** and **Rv-1.25** as the repenting one. Through these two hymns, the composer (शुनःशेपो/śunaḥ śepo?) clearly regrets the treatment given to **Varuna** earlier and requests **him** to forgive them first, and then set them free from the bondage or relieve them from the sins committed by them in the past. In the verse **Rv-1.24,14**; the Poet calls **Varuna** as the **asura pracetā/ Wise Asura** who is the king of the world. In the verse **Rv-1.24,11**; the Sage prays **him** not to be angry with them, but stay with them and grant them a longer life. It means to say that the Composer has systematically reinstated **Varuna** to **his** earlier position of the Supreme God, and declared **him** one of the senior Adityas as well.

In the hymn **Rv-1.25**; the Singer appeals to **Varuna** to forgive them for breaking his divine laws frequently. The Composer states that he wishes to remain **his** faithful worshiper and does not want to receive **his** wrath. In the verse **Rv-1.25,20**; the Poet has used term **Medhira** for describing **Varuna** as the **Wise God**.

It is agreed by many that **Ahura Mazda** of **Avesta** is nothing but **Asura Medha** in vedic **Sanskrit**. It is also said that **Ahura Mazda** of Avestan Supreme God carries the traits of **Varuna** of **Rigved**, but the **Avestan Composers** purposely do not call **him** by name “**Varuna**”.

In the hymns **Rv-1.24** and **Rv-1.25**; we find, independent use of the terms **Asura** and **Medhira** by the Poet, in the second last verses of both hymns, which is directly related to the early name of God **Varuna** as **Asura Medha** in the earlier form of **Avestan oral literature**, and the same would have become **Ahura Mazda** after some time, in Old Persian Language.

Rv-1.24,14: kṣ ayannasmabhyamasura pracetā rājannenāṃsi śísṛathaḥ kṛ tāni ||

Rv-1.25,20: tvaṃ viśvasya medhira divāśca ghmaśca rājasi | sa yāmaniprati śrudhi ||

VIII. Probing use of the term “Gatha” and its derivatives in Rigved

One of the **Avestan** texts is named as “**Gatha**” means “**Song**”, believed to be the **oldest** composed text among the various literature available about the philosophical culture of the Avestan people. Some experts believe that these hymns would have been composed by the Prophet Zarathushtra around 1400 to 1200 BCE, and some say that Zarathushtra would have lived anytime between 1000 to 600 BCE. It would be very interesting to know about the use of term “**Gatha**” in **Rigved**.

Mandala-wise use of the variants of the term “**Gatha**” found in **Rigved** are as under.

Gathino/ गाथिनो: Rv-1.7,1

Gathpatim/ गाथपतिः Rv-1.43,4

Gatham/ गाथं: Rv-1.167,6

Gathanyah/ गाथान्यः Rv-1.190,1

Gathasravasam/ गाथश्रवसं: Rv-8.2,38

Gatha/ गथ : Rv-8.20,16

Gathaya/ गाथया: Rv-8.32,1

Gathabhihi/ गाथाभिः Rv-8.71,14

Gathanyam/ गाथान्यं : Rv-8.92,2

Gathayorou/ गाथयोरौ : Rv-8.98,9

Gatham/ गाथं: Rv-9.11,4

Gathaya/ गाथया: Rv-9.99,4

Gathayeiti/ गाथयैति: Rv-10.85,6

From the above data, it is crystal clear that the Rigvedic Composers have used the term “**Gatha**” in the **four consecutive Late Mandalas** only, and those mandalas are Mandala-8, 9, 1, and 10. If we go by the version of the advocates of the “**Aryans Migration Theory**” (AMT); after separation of the two rival factions of the **Aryans** either in **Iran** or **BMAC** region, when the ancestors of the rigvedic Aryans landed in the Indus Valley, ideally, they would have been familiar with the term “**Gatha**” as the **oldest Avestan Literature** is known by the same name. After settling in the Indus Valley, when the rigvedic Poets began composition of **Rigved**, then they could have used the said term in some of the hymns of the Five Early Mandalas. **But, it is not so, why?**

Information drawn from **Rigved** on the word “**Gatha**” clearly manifests that its actual use began at the time of composition of Mandala-8, and during the period of composition of Mandala 2 to 7 (earlier to Mandala-8) either it was yet to be coined, or it came as a loan word from some corner in the later period. But the best possibility is, when the Rigvedic Priests after the “War of the Ten Kings” freely mingled with the Rulers and the People from the countries of the Five Tribes (including **Bhrgus** who went missing after Mandala-4, but participated in the war alongside Druhyus), through the interactions with other archaic Sanskrit speaking people (other Aryans who also lived in the Sapt-Sindhu Region), the word “**Gatha**” would have come to them.

Presence of several new words in the Late Mandalas, especially in Mandala-5 and 8 may be attributed to the interaction of the rigvedic Priests with the **Five Tribes**, other people residing to the west of river **Sindhu**, the Western Traders and the Tribes who came in contacts with the Priests when the latter lived in the region located to west of river Sindhu for a very long time.

IX. Concluding Remarks:

From the comparative study of the selected features of **Rigved** and **Avesta** that includes the related rigvedic terms “**Asura**”, “**Medha**”, and “**Gatha**”, it is crystal clear that the concept of “**Ahura Mazda**” / “**Wise Lord**” of **Avesta** has its origin in **Rigved**.

Presence of “**asuraḥ pitā naḥ**” phrase in the verse **Rv-5.83,6**; occurrence of the word “**pituṣ**” in the verse **Rv-8.6,10** for **Indra** learning the **Eternal Laws** from the character that is senior to **him**; and the appearance of a very special phrase, “**Pitre Asura**” in the hymn **Rv-10.124** of **Rigved**, clearly manifest that, the said character is nothing but God **Varuna** of **Rigved**, who was initially identified as the “**Asura Medha**” in the Rigvedic Sanskrit language at the time of split and then went on to become “**Ahura Mazda**” in **Avestan Language**, and has been clearly described as the **Creator of all worldly features** in “**Gathas**” composed during the later period by the Priests of the Avestan People.

Existence of the word, “**Gatha**” in the **Four** out of **Five Late Mandalas** indicates that the separation between the two opposing groups would have taken place either during or after Mandala-8, (probably around 1900 BCE) wherein, one group led by a section of **Bhrugus** who discarded the supremacy of **Indra**, moved out of Rigvedic Territory (west of river **Sindhu**) along with the **Anus**, and went to present-day Afghanistan first, lived on the bank of river **Helmand** of that region for some time, before finally settling in **Iran/BMAC**.

Availability of sufficient water in the rivers located to the west of river **Sindhu** and the presence of better living conditions on the west side of river **Sindhu** would have made some Priests to question frequent glorification of **Indra** in **Yajnas** for **contributing nothing** and then **his** very existence as well. Additionally, the past experience of failure of **Indra** to resolve the issue of **Drought** present in the region located to east of river **Sindhu** (around river **Saraswati**) despite making several offerings (including human-beings of some special occasion) in **Yajna** that compelled the Rigvedic People to shift to west side of river **Sindhu** earlier (after Mandala-7) would have been the real cause of disagreement between the two warring Priestly Groups. Therefore, in Avestan literature, **Indra** has been intentionally portrayed as the Demon/Evil Force and even projected as **Angra Mainyu (Angirasa Manyu)/Bad Spirit in the Younger Avestan literature**.

In reality, **Rigvedic** text presents **Varuna** as the **Monitor** of the all worldly events and implementor of **rta**, but **not as the Creator of the Universe**. As per the Rigvedic text, during the pre-rigvedic period itself, **Varuna** is said to have born to Goddess **Aditi**, and hence specifically

called as **one of the Earliest Adityas**. Additionally, **Rigved** also informs us that **Heaven** is the **father**, and **Earth** is the **mother** of all the Rigvedic Deities. Since **Varuna** has been described as the son of the Deities, in the rigvedic context, **He** alone can never become the **Creator of the Universe**. Additionally, nowhere in **Rigved**, **Indra** has been identified as the creator of the world, but purposely created to protect the world from the bad effect of **Vritra**. There is no doubt that, earlier to creation of **Indra**, God **Varuna** was the **Supreme Deity** of Pre-rigvedic Priests. **Indra** was specifically conceived mainly to defeat **Vritra** (personification of **Drought** that prevailed in **Saraswati- Sindhu Valley Region**, probably around **2200 BCE/ Meghalayan Age**). Please note that **Indra** is born to defeat **Vritra** (actual Drought), and **Yajna** ritual is purposely shaped subsequently, to enhance the strength of Indra and other Deities through the process of systematic glorification. As Yajna, Soma, Fire worship are the part of Avestan culture, therefore the division of the Priestly community into two separate but rival camps would have occurred after the **War of Ten Kings**, on the westside of river **Sindhu (the last phase of Mandala-8)**, where enough water was available. One section of the Priests who had endless love for **Indra**, continued their tradition of lauding **him** regularly, but the other group which strongly opposed unnecessary praising of **Indra** as the Supreme Deity, moved away from philosophy of the orthodox Priests, and even terminated **Indra** from the post of Deity.

Probably, because of the **Verbal conflict** that occurred due to praising of **Idle Indra**, the composers of Mandala-9 (the next rigvedic mandala), focused their attention only on the glorification of **Soma-Pavamana**, and did not give much importance to any Deity in it.

The two hymns of Mandala-1; **Rv-1.24**; and **Rv-1.25** clearly underline the fact that, **Varuna** has been re-established to his earlier place with the expression of the sincere regret by the rigvedic Composers and also the acceptance of **his** Authority as the Supreme Ruler. In these two hymns, the independent use of Rigvedic Sanskrit Words; “**Asura**” and “**Medha**” for defining the special attributes of **Varuna** as the “**Lord**” and “**Wise**” respectively is also evident.

Based on the lessons learned from the conflict with the orthodox Rigvedic Priests on the subject **Indra**, the Rebelled Priests would have decided to elevate **Varuna** to the highest place of the world of their imagination, and intentionally declared **Him** as **the Creator of all the things** (living, non-living, and the other Gods as well) present in the world (of their imagination), so that, like **Indra** in **Rigved**, in future, no character would pose challenge or supersede or overthrow **Varuna** from **his** place in any form. The permanent up-gradation or promotion of **Varuna/ Asura Medha** to the post of **Ultimate Creator** is the specialty of **Avesta** and is not found in **Rigved**.

occasions, one faction is permitted to use Symbol and flag of the original party, then other camp has to select a new symbol and has to design a new flag.

In other words, the Vocal or High Pitched Quarrel between the two factions of the rigvedic Priests would have culminated into the division of the community into two sections, each section claiming to be the **Real Aryans** means the Speakers of archaic Sanskrit and the followers of the true ancient philosophical path that was once originated on the bank of river **Saraswati**.

2. Differentiating between the “Good Asura” and the “Bad Asura:

As we see in **Rigved**, there are several **Asuras**, some of them are the **good Asuras** and some are the **bad Asuras** as well. The **good Asuras** are nothing but the **Gods/Deities**, and the **bad Asuras** are the **Demonic characters** who can be termed as the **Villains**.

Following example would make us to understand the logic behind the application of the term “**the Good Asura and the bad Asuras**”.

Take an example of a **Knife**. A medical professional uses a **knife** to perform a surgery for well-being of a patient. A criminal also uses a knife to threaten or kill someone. Here the instrument is the same, but the intentions of the two applicants are different. Hence, a **Doctor with a knife can become God for a patient**, but a **Criminal** with a sharp blade is a definitely a **Demon**.